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LYCIDAS.
COMUS.
L'ALLEGRO
AND
IL PENSEROSO
MILTON

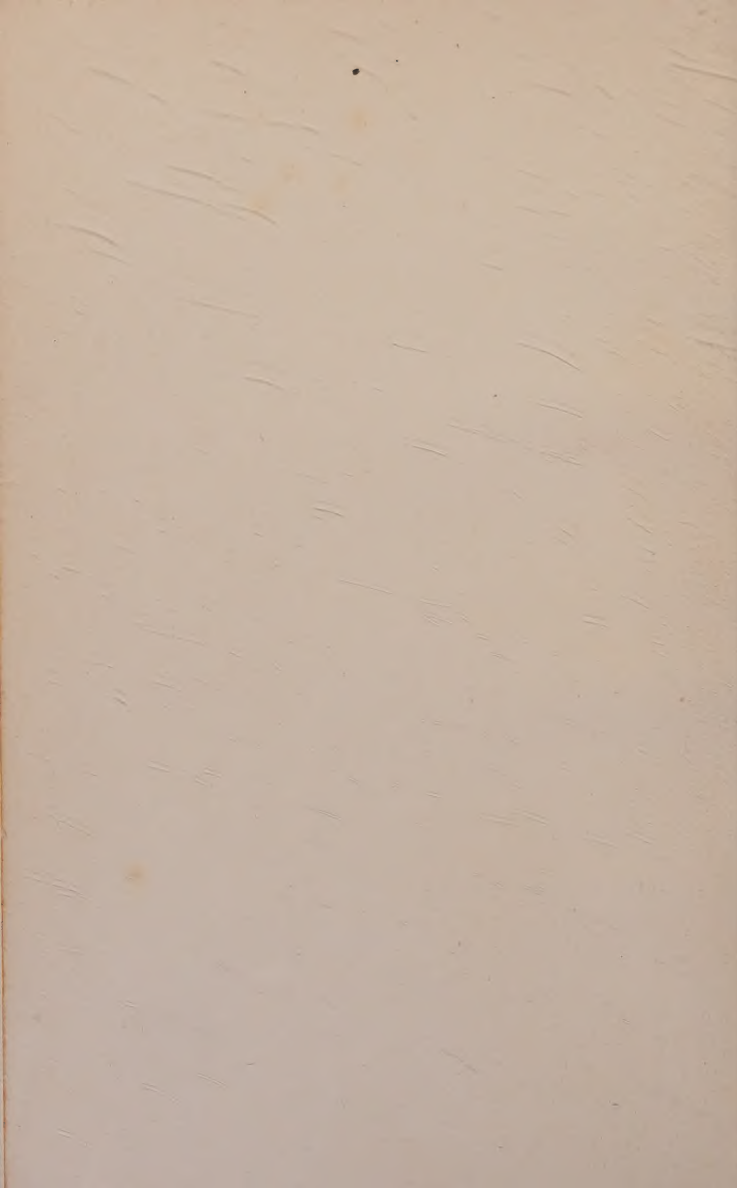
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Iambic Pentameter

Josie E. Jenkins.

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JOHN MILTON
AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-ONE

LYCIDAS, COMUS, L'ALLEGRO
IL PENSEROSO, AND OTHER POEMS

BY

JOHN MILTON

EDITED BY

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PREFACE

"WHEN a poet has been so much edited as Milton," says Lowell, "the temptation of whosoever undertakes a new edition to see what is not to be seen becomes great in proportion as he finds how little there is that has not been seen before." This gentle rebuke of editorial vanity has been kept in mind during the preparation of this edition of the *Minor Poems*, the purpose of which is merely to furnish a sensible and serviceable text-book, containing the material most useful to both teacher and student. It may not be possible for all teachers and students to use all of the material with the same degree of profit, but provision is made for what ought to be the ideal and working plan of all.

No attempt has been made to supply material for the historical background, so important in the study of Milton's life and works; this must be obtained from Green's *Short History of the English People*, or Gardiner's *A Student's History of England*, or other standard history of the period; and this reading should not be neglected.

In the preparation of the notes the aim has been to avoid, on the one hand, that meagerness of explanation which annoys rather than aids the student, and, on the other hand, that confusing surplusage of argumentative comment in which the poetry is lost in the interpretation. Many references are given to parallel and suggestive passages in classic and contemporary

literature, especially to the works of Vergil, Ovid, Spenser, and Shakspeare, authors who exercised a strong influence upon Milton. This feature of annotation, usually of doubtful utility, is valuable in the study of Milton for a particular reason. Of all our great poets Milton is the most learned, and the most dependent upon books for inspiration. Therefore, to trace the evolution of his thought and poetic imagery through his readings in favorite authors is the best means for understanding his mind and poetic methods.

Acknowledgments are due to many editors of Milton's poems, too many even to be enumerated. The monumental work of David Masson must always be mentioned with a kind of reverential respect. When the personal judgment or interpretation of a previous editor has been used, credit has been given by name.

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INTRODUCTION

LIFE OF MILTON

ONE who searches London for relics of our older literature will certainly turn off from bustling Cheapside at Bread Street, a lanelike street still so narrow that carts and pedestrians are forced jealously to share the sidewalk with each other. About halfway down the street the attention will be attracted by a tablet upon a red-brick business block containing a medalion of Milton and this inscription: "Milton—Born in Bread Street—1608—Baptized in Church of All Hallows—which stood here, ante 1878." Near by, at the sign of "The Spread Eagle," the poet was born, December 9, 1608. In the same street stood the Mermaid Tavern, where Shakspeare, Ben Jonson, and their fellows drank canary, matched jests, and coined the material of immortal plays; and as Milton was eight years old when Shakspeare died, it is not improbable that the great dramatist, when passing up and down the street, may have often smiled into the beautiful face of the large-eyed, soft-haired child. At least it is pleasant to "dally with" this "surmise," and to recall at the same time the fact that the first poem of Milton to appear in print was the *Epitaph on Shakspeare*.

The Milton home was in the very heart of Old London. Not far away was Little Britain and Bow Bells, and Old St. Paul's, and, beneath its shadow, St. Paul's School, where Milton prepared for the university. St. Paul's churchyard was then the center of the book trade, and even still its Paternoster Row, Ave Maria Lane and Amen Corner, with quaint old rookeries packed with booksellers' shops, give a glimpse of the Elizabethan London which Milton knew in his school days.

John Milton, the father, was a man of culture; a Puritan, but of the earlier type that still permitted the companionship of the Muses and recognized the beautiful as an attribute of the good. He was a lover of the fine arts, something of a poet, an accomplished musician, and the composer of several hymn tunes, two of which, *York* and *Norwich*, are yet popular. Here we see the source of that exquisite and marvelous sense of melody and harmony that dominates all of Milton's poetry. From earliest childhood he was trained both in appreciation and in execution. His favorite instrument was the organ, the tones of which we hear throughout all his literary work. That family circle in Bread Street is a pleasing scene, as we rebuild it in imagination, where Puritan simplicity was united with the classic graces of music and poetry.

There were three children in the family, an older sister and a younger brother. The father's business, that of a scrivener, evidently was prosperous, as he was able to retire at the same time that he was sending both sons to the university. He had destined this older son for the church, and appears to have remonstrated with him—mildly, one must think—for drifting away from this parental expectation. In a Latin poem, *Ad Patrem*, Milton pleads his own tastes and thanks his father for "not sending him where the way lay open for piling up money." His father may have been disappointed, but certainly he was not unsympathetic toward his son's increasing passion for letters. "It is quite plain," says Brooke, "that no one could have been more proud of a son, or more indulgent of his literary leisure. At the age of thirty-two Milton had not earned a sixpence."

But he had done what was better. Very early the dominating forces of his nature were revealed. Aubrey, his first biographer and a personal acquaintance, says that he was already a poet when eleven years old. The earliest specimens we have of his poetical experiments are two paraphrases of the Psalms, done in his fifteenth year. But precocious composition does not mark these early years so much as an intense enthusiasm

for knowledge. In many passages, especially of his prose works, with what Pattison calls "a superb and ingenuous egotism," Milton reveals himself autobiographically. One such passage describes the manner of his life at about the time he entered the university. "My father destined me while yet a little boy for the pursuits of literature, which I seized with such eagerness that from the twelfth year of my age I scarcely ever went from my lessons to bed before midnight; which indeed was the first cause of injury to my eyes, to whose natural weakness there were also added frequent headaches. All which not retarding my impetuosity in learning, he caused me to be daily instructed both at the grammar school and under other masters at home, and then when I had acquired various tongues, and also not some insignificant taste for the sweetness of philosophy, he sent me to Cambridge." This acquirement in the "tongues" consisted of Latin, Greek, French, Italian, and some knowledge of Hebrew.

He entered Christ's College, Cambridge, in 1625, the year of the accession of Charles I. There he remained seven years, taking the degrees of B.A. and M.A. in regular course. His rooms are still pointed out; when Wordsworth visited them he seemed to see the famous occupant:

"Familiarly, and in his scholar's dress
Bounding before me, yet a stripling youth,
A boy, no better, with his rosy cheeks
Angelical, keen eye, courageous look,
And conscious step of purity and pride."

The accounts of the charming personal appearance of the young Milton seem to be justified by his portraits. "He was of middle height, his complexion exceedingly fair and of delicate color, and his voice pure and delicate. Dark gray eyes, and auburn hair falling on his shoulders, went with an oval face." His feminine refinement of appearance and manners, as well as "a certain haughty delicacy" in his tastes and morals,

won for him the nickname of "the lady of Christ's," and during the first years of his course he is said to have been unpopular.

Nevertheless he was human, like other students at seventeen, for we find him in a quarrel with his tutor the first year, for which he was sent home. But he took his punishment easily as well as obstinately, as shown in a letter to his friend Diodati. "At present I care not to revisit the reedy Cam, nor does regret for my forbidden rooms grieve me." He says that if peaceful days and lettered leisure beneath his father's roof be exile, "then I refuse neither the name nor the lot of a runaway, and gladly I enjoy my state of banishment." And he describes his London pleasures, chief of which is "the pomp of the theater" where "impassioned tragedy wields high the bloody scepter," by which he is affected at times "even to bitter tears." In short, he was indulging his natural inclination for the drama, like any other child of the Elizabethan influence. It was probably during this enforced vacation that he wrote his first original poem in English, *On the Death of a Fair Infant*, the infant being the daughter of his sister, who had become Mrs. Phillips. The poem is interesting mainly for its suggestions of beauties soon to appear in more excellent form.

The difficulty with the tutor was adjusted and Milton returned to Cambridge to achieve finally reputation as a scholar and popularity as a man. Like Bacon before him, he evidently scorned much of the stereotyped college training, for he complains of being "dragged from his studies" for the purpose of "composing some trivial declamation," and says of the students that there "are barely one or two who do not flutter off, all unfledged, into theology, having gotten of philology or of philosophy scarce so much as a smattering." But we know that his own time was well spent in enriching his mind with the classics of all languages. One of the first impressions from the reading of Milton's poetry is that of the vastness of his learning; nothing that was fit food for a growing poet seems to have escaped him. In 1632 he left the university, "regretted

by most of the Fellows, who held him in no ordinary esteem." Among the poems written during the college period, many of which are in Latin, the most important are the *Hymn on the Nativity*, *At a Solemn Music*, *On Shakspeare*, *Song on May Morning*, and the sonnet *On Arriving at the Age of Twenty-three*, which Brooke regards as "one of the most solemn and beautiful pieces of personal writing in English poetry." The little *Song on May Morning*, composed in the gay and happy style of the Elizabethan singers, is interesting as showing Milton's relation to the preceding age.

Upon leaving the university the question of a career naturally pressed for decision. It was already apparent to his family as well as to himself that he could not enter the church, "perceiving," as he says, "what tyranny had invaded the church, that he who would take orders must subscribe slave." The spirit of liberty that dictated this decision was soon to inflame the English people to their great revolution. But there was another reason. To Diodati he wrote: "What God has resolved toward me I know not, but this I know at least, he has instilled into me, if into anyone, a vehement love of the beautiful. Not with so much labor, as the fables have it, is Ceres said to have sought her daughter Proserpina, as I am wont day and night to seek for this idea of the beautiful, through all the forms and faces of things." Here is the key to Milton's life and character. It is not merely æsthetic emotion that he professes, but a profound passion for beauty, beauty in nature, in art, in thought; not the beauty of material things alone, but beauty transfused through the spiritual essence of things and consummated in heavenly perfection. It is the spirit of the Renaissance mingled with Puritan idealism. To satisfy the yearnings of such a soul no career was adequate except that of scholar and poet, and to poetry, therefore, Milton's life was sacredly dedicated.

Milton now went to his father's country home at Horton, and there spent the next five years, or as he himself says, "spent a long holiday turning over the Latin and Greek authors." It

was, in fact, a period of studious preparation for the profession of poetry. Horton was an ideal place for this cloistral retirement, only seventeen miles from London, situated among odorous grain fields and orchards, "trim gardens" and the brightest of "smooth-shaven greens." Not far away flows the silver Thames, and a short walk brings in sight the towers of Windsor, "bosomed high in tufted trees." Here, says Milton, "my footsteps shall avoid the eyes of the profane. Be far off, watchful cares." In this charming seclusion he wrote *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Arcades*, *Comus*, and *Lycidas*, all redolent of the idyllic conditions of his happy life. The product of five years was not great, in number of lines, but had he never written anything else, he would still be accounted one of the great poets.

In 1637 Milton writes to Diodati: "What am I thinking of? Why, with God's help, of immortality! Forgive the word, I only whisper it in your ear! Yes, I am pluming my wings for a flight." Such incidental allusions, together with notes and jottings, show that Milton was now contemplating some great work, in comparison with which the poems already written were but mere prelusive experiments. But the preparation for the great flight was not yet complete. With an indulgent father's consent he set out, in 1638, for Italy, and spent a year beneath the skies that had known Dante and Petrarch. Everywhere he was received as a distinguished guest, a remarkable testimony to his personal worth and brilliancy of culture. At Florence he was invited into the Academies, or literary societies, and was induced to recite some of his own Latin poems, for which in return he received flattering addresses in verse from his Italian admirers. Here he visited "the famous Galileo, grown old, a prisoner (in his own house) to the Inquisition for thinking in astronomy otherwise than the Franciscan and Dominican licensers thought." Though warned of the imprudence of religious discussion, at Rome he stayed two months, "defending the reformed religion in the very metropolis of popery." At Naples he met the venerable

Manso, the patron and biographer of Tasso, and in acknowledgment of his courtesies addressed to him a complimentary Latin poem, which is notable for the hint it contains of a plan to write a great epic on the subject of King Arthur and his "Table Round." In return Milton received a gift of two engraved goblets, with a Latin epigram, signifying that he would be "*non Anglus sed Angelus*" if only his religious creed were the true one. It had been his original purpose to visit Sicily and Greece, but news of the increasing political troubles at home changed his purpose, for he "thought it base to be traveling for pleasure abroad" while his "countrymen were contending for their liberty at home." So he prepared to leave this fascinating land of beauty and song, but not until he had visited Florence a second time, "where he was received," he says, "with as much affection as if I had returned to my native country." Florence enchanted his heart, as it enchants the heart of every beauty-loving traveler to-day. There he "made the acquaintance of many noble and learned men," and to one of these noble acquaintances he says: "I eagerly go for a feast to that Dante of yours, and to Petrarca, and a good few more, nor has Athens itself with its pellucid Ilissus, nor old Rome with its banks of Tiber, been able to hold me, but that I love to visit your Arno and these hills of Fiesole."

In the summer of 1639 Milton was again in London, after an absence of about fifteen months. "As soon as I was able," he says, "I hired a spacious house in the city for myself and my books; where I again with rapture renewed my literary pursuits." As to the approaching civil contest, he for the present "calmly awaited the issue" and "trusted to the wise conduct of Providence." It was not long, however, before he plunged into that "troubled sea of noises and hoarse disputes" in which for nearly twenty years his poetic genius was almost totally submerged. Meanwhile, "in a pretty garden-house in Aldersgate Street," he engaged in the humble work of a school-master, undertaking at first the education of his two nephews, Edward and John Phillips, and finally receiving into his home

many other private pupils. That Milton had some theoretical interest in pedagogy is shown by his *Tractate on Education*, but this hardly lessens our surprise at finding him willing to spend precious time in exercising these boys in Latin paradigms. One literary duty pressed upon him at this time with compelling force. Upon his return to England the news of the death of his friend Diodati awaited him, and this event he memorialized in the Latin elegy *Epitaphium Damonis*. In this elegy the feeling is more tender and personal than in *Lycidas*; for of Milton's personal friendships the most cherished was that of Charles Diodati, the companion of his school days at St. Paul's, and the sharer of his most intimate thoughts in maturer years.

In the spring of 1643 Milton suddenly "took a journey into the country," says his nephew Phillips, "nobody about him certainly knowing the reason; or that it was any more than a journey of recreation; but home he returns a married man that went out a bachelor, his wife being Mary, the eldest daughter of Mr. Richard Powell." With this event sore tribulation entered Milton's life, which was to be henceforth in varying form his constant companion. The marriage was an extreme case of unsuitability of mind and purpose. At the end of a month the seventeen-year-old wife went to visit her parents and did not return for two years. Meanwhile, in hot protest against laws that afforded no release from such intolerable conditions, Milton published four pamphlets on *Divorce*, the only effect of which was to bring him into scandalous notoriety as a dangerous heretic, and the only interest of which to-day is the sympathetic interest always awakened by the exposure of a noble heart tortured by its own indiscretions.

The period from 1639 to 1660 is a part of Milton's life and work that lovers of his poetry desire most devoutly to forget; for Milton the writer of scurrilous political pamphlets can never be reconciled with Milton the poet of divine harmonies. It was a period of lamentable sacrifice of his splendid powers; he wrote no poetry, except the few personal sonnets; he pub-

lished twenty-five prose pamphlets, four of them in Latin, mainly upon topics arising out of the seething political turmoil of the period, only one of which, the *Areopagitica*, a plea for the liberty of unlicensed printing, survives as literature. In 1649, soon after the execution of the king, when the nation was contemplating the deed and its consequences in silent horror, Milton fearlessly came forth with a defense of the regicides, entitled the *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*. The value of such a writer's services was recognized by the leaders of the new government, and he received an appointment to the Latin secretaryship, the duties of which were nominally the translation and dictation of correspondence with foreign governments. But more important duties were assigned to him; he must use his great literary gifts to repel the enemies of the government who might venture into print. A book appeared entitled *Eikon Basilike*, the "Royal Image," purporting to have been written by the king during his imprisonment, which upon the dubious and susceptible public opinion was exerting a strong influence. To this Milton prepared a reply, *Eikonoklastes*, the "Image-breaker," written in "a tone of rude railing and insolent swagger," showing, says Pattison, how "the finer sense of the author of *L'Allegro* has suffered from immersion in the slough of religious and political faction." The next task of this kind afforded Milton an opportunity to vindicate the Commonwealth before all Europe. Charles II, now an exile at The Hague, invited Salmasius, the most famous scholar of the age, to write a defense of the royal cause, and this he did in the *Defensio Regia*. To this Milton replied in Latin with his *Defense of the English People*, the chief effect of which was to astonish the continental scholars with the discovery that an obscure Englishman could convert the noble Latin tongue into a bludgeon of personal vituperation with a facility equal, if not superior, to that of their great Salmasius. They were mighty antagonists, these two giant classicists, but in their tremendous efforts to crush each other they nearly lost sight of the causes they were supposed to serve; and to us who re-

view the contest to-day the spectacle is as pitiable as that of the mad Hercules slaying the sheep.

The struggle with Salmasius cost Milton his eyesight. The calamity had been threatening for some years, and he was now warned by his physician; and this was his reply: "I considered with myself that many had purchased less good with worse ill, as they who give their lives to reap only glory, and I thereupon concluded to employ the little remaining eyesight I was to enjoy in doing this, the greatest service to the common weal it was in my power to render." It is a sad reflection in connection with this high-minded resolution that in these pamphlets, which he continued to put forth almost up to the very hour of the return of the royal exiles, the great service which Milton thought to render to the cause of liberty was essentially expended for naught; the principles which he advocated with such fierce zeal were repudiated by the people whom he had passionately defended and his chief pamphlets were burned by the public hangman. In these extensive prose writings there are passages of great beauty and power, upon which Milton's fame as a prose writer rests; passages in which his spirit was for the moment lifted by some fine emotion out of the dusty avenues of controversy into the pure atmosphere of ideal beauty and truth. But the only comforting relief in all this dolorous period of prose is that of the sonnets written at long intervals during these years, which shed their gracious light like benignant stars shining through the swirling mists of a stormy night.

In 1652, the year of his total blindness, Milton's wife died, leaving three daughters, who grew to be a sore trial to him. Four years later he married Catherine Woodcock, the "espoused saint," whose brief life of "love, sweetness, goodness" is memorialized in one of the sonnets. In 1663 he married a third wife, Elizabeth Minshull, who seems to have cared for him wisely and tenderly through his remaining years. Much has been written about Milton's domestic infelicities. That he was not the most amiable of husbands and fathers, there is lit-

tle doubt. But genius, perhaps, is never successfully domesticated. The austerity of his studies, the rigidity of his morals, and his assumption of the inferiority of women naturally were not sources of sunshine in the household. He imposed severe tasks upon his "undutiful" daughters, requiring them to read to him with exact pronunciation books in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, and French, without teaching them or permitting them to know the meaning of anything they read; as they more and more rebelled, says Phillips, "they were all sent out to learn some curious and ingenious sorts of manufacture proper for women to learn"; and they never returned. But that there was an amiable side to his nature is shown in the genial sonnet to his friend *Mr. Lawrence*, and in the testimony of the friends of his old age; and to the essential nobility of his character and life all his poetry is an indubitable witness.

The Restoration, though materially a source of ruin to Milton, was in reality a restoration of the poet to himself. His property was largely swept away through confiscations and repudiated debts; his life was in danger and he was obliged to remain in close concealment until the Act of Indemnity was passed; he was blind, alone, abandoned by his own party, hated and despised by the party of triumph; yet in the midst of the wreck of his fortunes, of all that he had hoped for and labored for through twenty years, with Olympian calmness and resolution he put on his singing robes once more and completed that great work of which he had so long dreamed, "something so written to aftertimes as they should not willingly let it die."

In 1665, *Paradise Lost* was finished. As early as 1642 this subject had been decided upon, and the plan worked out in the form of a drama, but nothing more was done until 1658, when a beginning was made. In 1667 the great epic was published, and in the British Museum may be seen the contract with the publisher, by the terms of which Milton received £10 for the first two editions, and his widow £8 in settlement of all further claims. The distinction of being the first reader of *Paradise Lost* was given to Milton's helpful Quaker friend,

Thomas Elwood. One day the poet handed him a manuscript, asking him to read it and return it with his judgment. "When I came home and had set myself to read it, I found it was that excellent poem which he entitled *Paradise Lost*." Upon returning the poem Elwood remarked: "Thou hast said much here of *Paradise Lost*, but what hast thou to say of *Paradise Found*?" From this hint arose *Paradise Regained*, an epic differing widely from *Paradise Lost*, especially in its condensation and chaste plainness of style. This poem was published in 1671, in the same volume with *Samson Agonistes*, the last work of Milton in poetry. In this austere drama in the Greek form Milton made the last literary revelation of the repressed agonies of his own great soul. Between his life and the life of Samson there were many correspondencies, and beneath the cold, sculpturesque expression of the tragedy a frequency of autobiographic allusion is easily discoverable.

It is a fundamental assumption of literary criticism that *Paradise Lost* places its author among the four or five greatest poets of the world. In sublimity of theme and vastness of conception, and in the supreme excellence of artistic execution, he is approached only by Dante. But it is also a fact of literary history that the greatness of *Paradise Lost* rests upon the erudite authority of the few rather than upon the enriched and spontaneous experience of the many. To most readers of books to-day its supernal beauty is merely a tradition. The richness and magnificence of its learning, the majestic sweep of its rhythms, the extreme reaches of the imagination and vagueness of delineation, are qualities that detach it from ordinary human experience and appreciation. "An appreciation of Milton," says Pattison, "is the last reward of consummated scholarship."

During the last few years of Milton's life he wrote no poetry; but if the powers of his creative genius were exhausted, there was still an insatiable energy for literary work. He produced a *History of Britain*, a Latin treatise on logic, a Latin grammar, a tract on *True Religion, Heresy, Schism and Toleration*,

a *Brief History of Muscovy*, and a Latin treatise on *Christian Doctrine*. The manuscript of this last work was discovered in 1823, and the publication of a translation was the occasion of Macaulay's famous essay on Milton in the *Edinburgh Review*.

Milton's home was now in Artillery Walk, Bunhill Fields, and of his daily life here we have a fairly minute account. "He used to get up very early, generally at four o'clock in summer and five in winter. After having a chapter or two of the Hebrew Bible read to him, he worked, first in meditation by himself, and then after breakfast by dictation to his amanuensis for the time being, interspersed with further readings to him from the books he wanted to consult, till near his midday dinner. A good part of the afternoon was then given to walking in the garden, or to playing on the organ, and singing, or hearing his wife sing." A glimpse of his person is given in the notes of the painter Richardson: "An aged clergyman of Dorsetshire found John Milton in a small chamber hung with rusty green, sitting in an elbow chair, and dressed neatly in black; pale, but not cadaverous; his hands and fingers gouty, and with chalk-stones. He used also to sit in a gray coarse cloth coat at the door of his house near Bunhill Fields in warm sunny weather, and so, as well as in his house, receive the visits of people of distinguished parts as well as quality." Among these visitors was the popular court poet Dryden, and there were many more of "the learned," says Aubrey, "much more than he did desire." But there soon came a day when this pale-faced figure with the sightless eyes was seen no more at the doorway in Bunhill Fields. On November 8, 1674, Milton died, and in the chancel of St. Giles, Cripplegate, he was buried beside his father; and of all the roistering poets and fine gentlemanly wits of the time, not one save Dryden knew that the greatest prophet of their tribe had gone out from among them forever.

CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY

I. *Lyric Period.* 1608-1639

1608. Born in Bread Street, London, December 9.
- 1608-25. At St. Paul's School. Friendship with Charles Diodati.
1624. *Paraphrases of Psalms CXIV and CXXXVI.*
1625. Enters Christ College, Cambridge. Accession of Charles I.
1626. *On the Death of a Fair Infant. Elegia Prima: Ad Carolum Diodatum.*
1628. *At a Vacation Exercise in the College.*
1629. Degree of B.A. *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity.*
1630. *On Time. At a Solemn Music. Song on May Morning. On Shakspeare.*
1631. *Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester. Sonnet: On his having arrived at the Age of Twenty-three. Sonnet: To the Nightingale.*
1632. Degree of M.A., Cambridge. Leaves the university.
- 1632-38. At Horton, Buckinghamshire.
- 1632 (?) *L'Allegro. Il Penseroso.*
- 1632 (?) *Arcades: Part of an Entertainment at Harefield.*
1634. *Comus.*
1635. Degree of M.A., Oxford.
1637. Death of his mother. *Lycidas.*
- 1638-39. Journey to Italy. *Italian Sonnets. Mansus.*
1639. Lodgings in St. Bride's Churchyard, Fleet Street. *Epitaphium Damonis.*

II. *Prose Period.* 1640-1660.

1640. The "garden-house" in Aldersgate Street. Long Parliament meets.
1641. Pamphlets: *Of Reformation touching Church Discipline, Reason of Church Government, etc.*

1642. Civil War begins. Sonnet: *When the Assault was intended to the City. Apology for Smectymnuus*. First sketch for *Paradise Lost*.
1643. Marries Mary Powell. First *Divorce* tract.
1644. *Areopagitica*. *On Education*. Sonnets: *To a Virtuous Young Lady* and *To the Lady Margaret Ley*. More *Divorce* tracts. Battle of Marston Moor.
1645. First edition of Poems. Two Sonnets: *On the Detraction which followed upon my writing Certain Treatises*.
1646. Death of his father. Sonnet: *To Mr. H. Lawes on his Airs*.
1648. Sonnet: *On the Lord General Fairfax*.
1649. Execution of Charles I. *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*. Appointed Latin Secretary to Cromwell. *Eikonoklastes*.
1651. *Defense of the English People*.
1652. Death of first wife. Total blindness. Sonnets: *To the Lord General Cromwell* and *To Sir Henry Vane the Younger*.
1654. *Second Defense of the English People*.
1655. Sonnets: *On the Late Massacre in Piedmont*, *On his Blindness*, *To Mr. Lawrence*, *To Cyriack Skinner*, *To the Same*.
1656. Marries Catherine Woodcock.
1658. Death of second wife. Sonnet: *On his Deceased Wife*. Death of Cromwell. Composition of *Paradise Lost* begun.
1660. *Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth*. Restoration. Milton in hiding and in custody.

III. *Epic Period*. 1660–1674.

1660. Home at High Holburn and Jewin Street.
1663. Marries Elizabeth Minshull.
1664. At Artillery Walk, Bunhill Fields.

1665. At Chalfont-St.-Giles, during the Plague. *Paradise Lost* completed.
 1666. The Great Fire. The birthplace in Bread Street burned.
 1667. *Paradise Lost* published.
 1671. *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* published.
 1673. Second edition of the early poems.
 1674. *Paradise Lost* reëdited. Death, November 8.

APPRECIATIONS.

“O MIGHTY-MOUTH'D inventor of harmonies,
 O skill'd to sing of Time or Eternity,
 God-gifted organ-voice of England,
 Milton, a name to resound for ages;
 Whose Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,
 Starr'd from Jehovah's gorgeous armories,
 Tower, as the deep-domed empyrean
 Rings to the roar of an angel onset—
 Me rather all that bowery loneliness,
 The brooks of Eden mazily murmuring,
 And bloom profuse and cedar aches
 Charm, as a wanderer out in ocean,
 Where some refulgent sunset of India
 Streams o'er a rich ambrosial ocean isle,
 And crimson-hued the stately palm woods
 Whisper in odorous heights of even.”

—Tennyson.

“Milton is undoubtedly one of the few great poets in the history of the world, and if he falls short of Homer, Dante, and Shakspeare, it is chiefly because he expresses less of that humanity, both universal and quintessential, which they, and especially the last, put into verse. Narrowness is his fault. But the intense individuality which often accompanies narrowness is his great virtue—a virtue which no poet, which no writer either in verse or prose, has ever had in greater measure

than he, and which hardly any has been able to express with more varied and exquisite harmony.”—*George Saintsbury*.

“In the sure and flawless perfection of his rhythm and diction he is as admirable as Vergil or Dante, and in this respect he is unique among us. No one else in English literature and art possesses the like distinction. Thomson, Cowper, Wordsworth, all of them good poets who have studied Milton, followed Milton, adopted his form, fail in their diction and rhythm if we try them by that high standard of excellence maintained by Milton constantly. From style really high and pure Milton never departs; their departures from it are frequent. Shakspeare is divinely strong, rich, and attractive. But sureness of perfect style Shakspeare himself does not possess. . . . That Milton of all our English race, is by his diction and rhythm the one artist of the highest rank in the great style whom we have; this I take as requiring no discussion, this I take as certain. The mighty power of poetry and art is generally admitted. But where the soul of this power, of this power at its best, chiefly resides, very many of us fail to see. It resides chiefly in the refining and elevation wrought in us by the high and rare excellence of the great style. We may feel the effect without being able to give ourselves clear account of its cause, but the thing is so. Now, no race needs the influences mentioned, the influences of refining and elevation, more than ours; and in poetry and art our grand source for them is Milton.”—*Matthew Arnold*.

“To the greatness of the artist Milton joined the majesty of a pure and lofty character. His poetic style was as stately as his character, and proceeded from it. Living at a time when criticism began to purify the verse of England, and being himself well acquainted with the great classical models, his work is seldom weakened by the false conceits and the intemperance of the Elizabethan writers, and yet is as imaginative as theirs, and as various. He has not their naturalness, nor all their

intensity, but he has a larger grace, a more finished art, and a sublime dignity they did not possess. All the kinds of poetry which he touched he touched with the ease of great strength, and with so much weight that they became new in his hands. He put a new life into the masque, the sonnet, the elegy, the descriptive lyric, the song, the choral drama; and he created the epic in England. The lighter love poem he never wrote, and we are grateful that he kept his coarse satirical power apart from his poetry. In some points he was untrue to his descent from the Elizabethans, for he had no dramatic faculty, and he had no humor. He summed up in himself the learned influences of the English Renaissance, and handed them on to us."—*Stopford Brooke.*

"It is the prerogative of this great man to stand at this hour foremost of all men in literary history, and so (shall we not say?) of all men, in the power *to inspire*. Virtue goes out of him into others. Leaving out of view the pretensions of our contemporaries (always an incalculable influence), we think no man can be named whose mind still acts on the cultivated interest of England and America with an energy comparable to that of Milton. As a poet, Shakspeare undoubtedly transcends, and far surpasses him in his popularity with foreign nations; but Shakspeare is a voice merely; who and what he was that sang, that sings, we know not. Milton stands erect, commanding, still visible as a man among men, and reads the laws of the moral sentiment to the newborn race. There is something pleasing in the affection with which we can regard a man who died a hundred and sixty [now two hundred and thirty-two] years ago in the other hemisphere, who, in respect to personal relations, is to us as the wind, yet by an influence purely spiritual makes us jealous for his fame as for that of a near friend. He is identified in the mind with all select and holy images, with the supreme interests of the human race."—*Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

"MILTON! thou shouldst be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee: she is a fen
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay."

—Wordsworth.

INTRODUCTIONS TO THE POEMS

THE term "minor poems" is unhappily chosen as a general title for Milton's shorter poems, for the student naturally finds in it an implication of inferiority to the long epic poems, confusing greatness with extent. The shorter poems are as perfect in their kind as is *Paradise Lost* in its kind, and it is perhaps, after all, a convention of criticism rather than a fact of experience that makes an epic essentially greater as poetry than a lyric. Certainly if we measure poetry by the efficiency of its influence upon human culture, the shorter poems are equal, if not superior, to the great epics; thousands read and absorb into their lives the beauty, purity, and melody of *L'Allegro*, *Comus*, and *Lycidas*, who merely admire the solemn cadences of *Paradise Lost* in an abstract, intellectual way, as the traveler pauses for a moment in astonished gaze before the sublime isolation of some Alpine peak and then hastens on to hills and valleys that are alive with blooming flowers.

"I do not think," says Henry Van Dyke, "that *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, and *Comus* have any lower place in the world, or any less enduring life, than *Paradise Lost*. We have thought so much of Milton's strength and sublimity that we have ceased to recognize what is also true, that he, of all English poets, is by nature the supreme lover of beauty." More and more critical opinion is freeing itself from the overshadowing impressiveness of *Paradise Lost* while estimating the value of the shorter poems. Pattison regards *Lycidas* as "the high-water mark of English poesy and of Milton's own production"; and *Comus* Saintsbury says he has "the audacity to think his greatest work, if scale and merit are considered." Such critical judgments as these are valuable, without necessarily being correct. More temperate and no less suggestive is the remark of Augustine Birrell: "A study of these minor poems will enable us half sadly to realize how much went and how much was sacrificed to make the author of *Paradise Lost*."

Milton has been called the "last of the Elizabethans." His work is a connecting link between the great age of spontaneous romanticism and the succeeding age of classical aspiration and critical refinement. His last poems are perfect in the restraint of classical form and finish; his early poems are all written in the free, light-hearted spirit of the Elizabethans, exhibiting always the joyous thrill of the creative impulse.

ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY

THE Christmas hymn was written while Milton was at Cambridge, in 1629, when he was just twenty-one years of age. The origin of the poem is described by Milton in the sixth Latin elegy, addressed to his friend Diodati, in a passage which Professor Moody thus translates: "If you will know what I am doing, I will tell you, if indeed you think my doings worth your concern. I am singing the King of Heaven, bringer of peace, and the fortunate days promised by the holy book; the wanderings of God, and the stabling under a poor roof of Him who

rules with his father the realms above; the star that led the wizards, the hymning of angels in the air, and the gods flying to their endangered fanes. This poem I made as a birthday gift for Christ; the first light of Christmas dawn brought me the theme."

Of the five great "shorter poems" this is the least important in literary merit, yet there is little divergency of opinion as to its high excellence. There are obvious faults in the poem, due partly to the exuberance of a young mind flooded with classic lore, and partly to the bad examples of his contemporaries. The language is sometimes too fine, and an ingenious figure is sometimes too much like the "conceits" of Donne, Cowley, and others of the fantastic school. As Gosse suggests: "We read the *Nativity Ode* with rapture, but sometimes with a smile." But such slight excrescences are quickly smoothed away by the general impressiveness of beauty. "We should rather dwell on such stanzas as XIX and XXIV, in which not a word, not a syllable, mars the distinguished perfection of the poem, but in which every element combines to produce a solemn, harmonious, and imposing effect."

Hallam regarded this ode as "perhaps the most beautiful in the English language," and Landor thought stanzas IV-VII of the *Hymn* to be "incomparably the noblest piece of lyric poetry in any modern language." So even the latest critics praise the poem in excessive terms, but always with critical reservations. Thus Saintsbury says: "It shows youth in a certain inequality, in a slight overdose of ornament, and especially in a very inartistic conclusion. But nowhere even in Milton does the mastery of harmonies appear better than in the exquisite rhythmical arrangement of the piece, in the almost unearthly beauty of the exordium, and in the famous stanzas beginning 'The oracles are dumb.' It must be remembered that at this time English lyric was in a very rudimentary and ill-organized condition."

L'ALLEGRO AND IL PENSEROSO

No positive date or place can be given for the composition of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, but Masson's conclusion is generally accepted, that they were written in 1632 or 1633, the first years of Milton's quiet retirement at Horton. All of the circumstances of the poet's life at this time are in accord with the character of the poems, and we can hardly conceive them to have been written elsewhere than in the midst of such rural scenes and idyllic experiences as he now enjoyed. Much critical energy has been expended in the attempt to force upon these poems a local habitation, which, it is pretty certain, their author never intended them to have. It has, for example, troubled the critics sorely to find that there are no mountains near Horton high enough for the "laboring clouds" to rest upon, and no "wide-watered shore" over which the "far-off curfew" could sound, and that pollard willows are more numerous in that locality than "hedge-row elms," and many other inconsistencies that disturb the "reality" of the poems.

Palgrave speaks of these poems as "the earliest pure descriptive lyrics in our language." But the term "descriptive" must be understood in a qualified sense. There was no descriptive poetry in the seventeenth century, in the sense in which we now use the term. Outward nature was only a background and symbolic setting for human nature. Science had not yet added its microscope to the poet's tools. Milton was not describing landscapes, but typical and idealized human emotions, and he idealized nature to suit the varying emotions.

The suggestion of theme, as well as of plan of composition, may have come to Milton from some verses prefixed to Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, that marvelous fabric of perverted wisdom which had for the intellects of that age a fascination quite incomprehensible to readers of to-day. The verses are called *The Author's Abstract of Melancholy*, in which the two phases of melancholy, the "sweet" and the "sour," are de-

scribed in alternate stanzas. Two stanzas will illustrate the possible relation to Milton's poems:

“ When to myself I act and smile,
With pleasing thoughts the time beguile,
By a brookside or wood so green,
Unheard, unsought for, or unseen,
A thousand pleasures do me bless,
And crown my soul with happiness;
All my joys besides are folly,
None so sweet as melancholy.

When I lie, sit, or walk alone,
I sigh, I grieve, making great moan,
In a dark grove or irksome den,
With discontents and furies, then
A thousand miseries at once
Mine heavy heart and soul ensconce;
All my griefs to this are jolly,
None so sour as melancholy.”

A closer resemblance even than this is found in a song in Fletcher's play of *The Nice Valor*, which very likely was suggested to the dramatist by Burton's verses:

“ Hence, all you vain delights,
As short as are the nights
Wherein you spend your folly;
There's naught in this life sweet,
If man were wise to see't,
But only melancholy,
O sweetest melancholy!

Welcome folded arms and fixèd eyes,
A sigh that piercing mortifies,
A look that's fasten'd to the ground,
A tongue chain'd up without a sound,

Fountain heads, and pathless groves,
Places which pale passion loves;
Moonlight walks when all the fowls
Are warmly housed, save bats and owls;
 A midnight bell, a parting groan:
 These are the sounds we feed upon.
Then stretch our bones in a still gloomy valley;
Nothing's so dainty sweet as lovely melancholy."

The play in which this song occurs was not printed until ten or fifteen years after Milton's poems were written, but it had been on the boards of the theater many years before, and we are certain that during these years Milton was familiar with whatever was best worth knowing at the theater. Other poets contributed a hint, a phrase, or a fancy, as we find throughout the poems—Spenser, Shakspeare, Browne, Sylvester's *Du Bartas*, and Marlowe; and it is worth while to trace some of these borrowings, in order to understand just how Milton converted borrowed tinsel into gold lace to decorate the garments of his own thought.

The Italian titles were chosen, perhaps, because of the difficulty of finding two native words that would express precisely the intended antithesis. As nearly as they can be translated, they mean "The Cheerful Man" and "The Thoughtful or Meditative Man"; not two different persons or types, but two moods of the same person. Such duality is the commonest experience of life. The ingenious and minute manner in which Milton has interwoven the two poems by parallelism and contrast shows that he intended them to be read together as one poem in two parts, as it were. Each is incomplete, cannot be fully understood, without the other. It is therefore a rather fruitless effort of criticism that insists upon finding a more genuine autobiographic expression of feeling in one poem than in the other. Hales, for example, thinks that the poet is "not altogether at home" in *L'Allegro*, but "into his portrait of *Il Penseroso* he throws himself, so to speak, with all his soul . . .

the wings of his Mirth are somewhat constrained in their flight. But in the other poem his whole nature appears." And it is noted that *Il Penseroso* is the longer poem, and that it must have been written first (the more, therefore, *con amore*) because, forsooth, "'not unseen,' in *L'Allegro*, must have been written after the 'unseen' of *Il Penseroso*." A more consistent supposition would be that the two poems were written at one and the same time. Those who draw these extreme inferences seem to be over-anxious to identify the spirit of *Il Penseroso* with the austerity and spiritual isolation of Milton's later years. At the time when these poems were written there was probably not a happier young man in all England than Milton. He undoubtedly agreed with Burton, whom he was just then reading, that "a most incomparable delight it is so to melancholize and build castles in the air." Moreover, he alludes in various places to his belief that "the cherub contemplation" should occupy a large share of a poet's time, if he is to produce worthy poetry; but farther than this general devotion to the sacredness and high ideals of his art, there is no real evidence that he was more in sympathy with *Il Penseroso* than with *L'Allegro*.

"The two poems," says Dr. Garnett, "are complementary rather than contrary, and may be, in a sense, regarded as one poem, whose theme is the praise of the reasonable life. It resembles one of those pictures in which the effect is gained by contrasted masses of light and shade, but each is more nicely mellowed and interfused with the qualities of the other than it lies within the resources of pictorial skill to effect. Mirth has an undertone of gravity, and melancholy of cheerfulness. There is no antagonism between the states of mind depicted; and no rational lover, whether of contemplation or of recreation, would find any difficulty in combining the two."

Of the literary quality of the poems Macaulay says: "In none of the works of Milton is his peculiar manner more happily displayed than in the *Allegro* and the *Penseroso*. It is impossible to conceive that the mechanism of language can be

brought to a more exquisite degree of perfection. These poems differ from others as attar of roses differs from ordinary rose-water, the close-packed essence from the thin diluted mixture. They are indeed not so much poems as collections of hints, from each of which the reader is to make out a poem for himself. Every epithet is a text for a canto."

The metrical construction of these poems is the iambic tetrameter rhymed couplet, the melody being varied, with an exquisite adjustment of meter to changing thought and scene, by the use of an occasional trochee for the iambus, an imperfect foot at the beginning of the line, and a feminine rhyme, here and there. The formal introductions are constructed in the manner of the ode, consisting of alternate trimeters and pentameters, with an intricate rhyme scheme. This octosyllabic verse was much used by the later Elizabethans, and Milton had used it, rather crudely, in the *Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester*. He experimented very little with verse forms, but perfected those forms which he adopted. A comparison should be made with poems in this meter by Ben Jonson, Davenant, Herrick and others, to understand the full beauty and dignity which Milton gave to a meter which in the hands of ordinary poets easily deteriorates into mere jingle. "Never were ideas of such dignity," says Dr. Garnett, "embodied in verse so easy and familiar, and with such apparent absence of effort."

COMUS

MILTON'S strong and abiding interest in the drama is evidenced in all his works. In familiar correspondence during his undergraduate days, he speaks of his enjoyment of the theater. His first published poem was in praise of Shakspeare. In *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* he pays beautiful tributes of admiration to both the comic and the tragic stage. In *Arcades* and *Comus* he adopted and made peculiarly his own that form of drama most intimately associated with the pomp of royalty and the extravagant magnificence of the court, so detested by

the Puritan protesters. Throughout his early poems there is almost a continuous echo of the speech of the Elizabethan drama, showing his intimate familiarity with the best works of the dramatists, especially Shakspere. Among Milton's manuscripts that have been preserved, there are four separate drafts of *Paradise Lost*, all indicating that he originally intended to treat the subject in the form of a choral drama. Finally, his last poem, *Samson Agonistes*, is a tragedy in the Greek form.

All of this is merely evidence that Milton was the product of his age, and in no literary sense "like a star that dwelt apart." His isolation, as Birrell suggests, began with the publication of his first *Divorce* pamphlet, an isolation in no way related to his literary environment. He was among the Puritans, but not of them; his long hair, worn undoubtedly to his prejudice among Roundhead associates, was a symbol, as it were, of his real alliance with the party of culture and literary tradition. His splendid acquirements in literature and music, and his passionate pursuit of the beautiful, made it impossible for him to sympathize with the hostilities of his own party toward the drama and other forms of art. The genesis of *Comus*, therefore, was in keeping with his culture and character, and it was not altogether, as Pattison asserts, "a strange caprice of fortune that made the future poet of the Puritan epic the last composer of a Cavalier masque."

Like so many other Elizabethan products of the Renaissance, the masque was an importation from Italy. At first it was merely a part of the elaborate spectacles prepared for great public occasions, like Leicester's pageant described in Scott's *Kenilworth*. The characters were mainly mythologic, with some allegorical significance appropriate to the occasion, speaking in pompous monologue, with no dramatic relation to each other. Songs and dances were added, with various "mummings," making a composite and delightful entertainment. Although maintaining a development independent of the drama proper, it gradually assumed dramatic form and feature, and

drew into its service some of the best writers for the stage. Shakspeare gave it only a tolerant glance now and then, as in the interlude in the fourth act of the *Tempest*, but Ben Jonson devoted some of his best talents to this species of dramatic pageantry and raised it to the dignity of literature.

With the court and aristocracy the masque became an extravagant fashion; a princely wedding or royal visit was not complete without this gorgeous divertisement. It had the peculiar attraction of allowing the lords and fine ladies to assume the parts; even the king was sometimes in the cast; and vast sums were expended on scenery, costumes, and music. *The Triumph of Peace*, a masque given by the Inns of Court in 1634, the year of *Comus*, cost over £20,000. A famous controversy arose between Ben Jonson and Inigo Jones, the court architect, as to which was the more important in the production of these grand shows, the poet or the stage carpenter. Just at its culmination, Milton was induced to contribute to this aristocratic fad, and did so in his own superior and high-minded manner. *Comus*, the best of the masques—the most poetical and most beautiful—was also the last composition of any importance in this style; for it was near to the time when all such revels were ended by Puritan injunction.

While Milton was meditating the Muse at Horton, he wrote the fragmentary masque *Arcades*, probably in 1633, to serve as "part of an entertainment presented to the Countess Dowager of Derby at Harefield." Henry Lawes, the friend of Milton and the most distinguished composer of the period, was giving musical instruction in the family of the Earl of Bridgewater, the son-in-law of the countess; naturally, therefore, he was in charge of the grand musical functions given by the family. What the other parts of this entertainment were we do not know, but the excellence of Milton's part was recognized, for the next year (1634) he was again invited to coöperate with Lawes in preparing a more elaborate entertainment to celebrate the installation of the Earl of Bridgewater as Lord President of Wales. For this occasion *Comus* was written, and presented

at Ludlow Castle, the official residence of the Lord President. Lawes wrote the music for the songs and assumed the parts of the *Attendant Spirit* and *Thyrsis*. The parts of the *Lady* and the two *Brothers* were acted by the Earl's children, Lady Alice, not yet fifteen years old, and two younger brothers. These boys had earlier in the same year acted in Carew's gorgeous masque, *Cælum Britannicum*, given at Whitehall, the music of which was furnished by Lawes. There is no evidence that Milton was present at Ludlow, nor that his name was associated with the entertainment. Three years later the masque was published by Lawes, for a reason explained in the dedication to the young Lord Brackley. "Although not openly acknowledged by the author, yet it is a legitimate offspring, so lovely and so much desired that the often copying of it hath tired my pen to give my several friends satisfaction, and brought me to the necessity of producing it to the public view." The music for five songs in the masque in the composer's own hand is still preserved in the British Museum. Probably the first critical praise of *Comus* came to the author from the venerable scholar, Sir Henry Wotton, then provost of Eton College. "A dainty piece of entertainment," he writes, in acknowledgment of a copy of Lawes's edition sent him by Milton, "wherein I should much commend the tragical [i.e. the dialogue] part, if the lyrical did not ravish me with a certain Doric delicacy in your songs and odes, whereunto I must plainly confess to have seen yet nothing parallel in our language."

Editorial experts are fond of pointing out the sources from which Milton may have obtained the material for *Comus*, sometimes leaving his original creative faculty in a hazardous state of obligation. In Ben Jonson's masque, *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*, a character *Comus* appears, but very unlike Milton's character. A Latin play entitled *Comus* by a Dutch professor, Hendrick van der Putten (*Erycius Puteanus*), was published at Oxford in 1634. Milton undoubtedly saw this play and borrowed from it some points for his own. The adventure of

the two brothers searching for a lost sister who has fallen into the power of an enchanter is found in George Peele's *Old Wives' Tale*. Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* probably furnished some hints for *Comus*, the main theme, the power of chastity, being the same in each. The Circe myth was the subject of Browne's *Inner Temple Masque*, and some passages of *Comus* seem to indicate Milton's familiarity with this work. There can be no doubt of his indebtedness especially to Fletcher and Peele, but the indebtedness is not in the nature of plagiarism. Undoubtedly ethical obligations and standards of courtesy among authors to-day would not warrant some of Milton's unacknowledged appropriations. But he did just what Shakespeare did, picked up the crude ore of poetry wherever he happened to find it and made it his own by refining it into pure gold. He himself laid down the rule that "borrowing, if it be not bettered by the borrower, is accounted plagiaire." Certainly he could never be convicted of plagiarism by this rule. "It is wonderful," says Lowell, "how from the most withered and juiceless hint gathered in his reading his grand images rise like an exhalation; how from the most battered old lamp caught in that huge drag-net with which he swept the waters of learning he could conjure a tall genius to build his palaces."

The varied meters of *Comus* had already been used by Milton, with one exception; here for the first time he used blank verse, which for dramatic purposes had been perfected by Shakespeare, and was soon to be wrought by Milton into a new perfection of epic grandeur. The meaning of the poem is not far to seek, if interpretation does not become too ingenious. Under the thin cloak of the masque Milton expresses a profound personal philosophy. The central theme, the power of purity, moral and spiritual, a power allied with Divinity, was fundamental to all of Milton's thought about ideal manhood and womanhood. He often reverts to the theme in his various writings, and here develops it with the fine enthusiasm of an intense conviction. The *Lady* is symbolical, as the Madonna is symbolical, of a lofty scheme of life. To interpret into the

poem a satirical purpose is to mar its artistic harmony and completeness. Browne, for example, discovers "an allegorical treatment of two themes, the license of the court and the Romanizing tendencies of the Laudian prelates." Considering the circumstances under which the masque was written and performed, such a treatment would have been not only highly improper, but essentially impossible.

As for the beauty of the poem, "it is impossible to single out passages," says Saintsbury, "for the whole is golden. If poetry could be taught by the reading of it, then indeed the critic's advice to a poet might be limited to this: 'Give your days and nights to the reading of *Comus*.'" The art of the poem is supreme. "It has not the pure sweetness of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*," says Moody, "nor does it anywhere rise to the lyric heights of *Lycidas*; but over its diverse and seemingly irreconcilable elements has gone the cool hand of the master, to build and subdue. There is in it a severity of tone, a chastity of ornament, a calm artistic vision, to which most poets, even the greatest, attain only by long purging of their eyes with euphrasy and rue."

LYCIDAS

LYCIDAS is a pastoral elegy. This lyric form originated with the Greek idyllists of Sicily, Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus, and was further developed in the *Eclogues* of Vergil. The "Lament for Daphnis" in the first idyl of Theocritus may be regarded as the prototype of Milton's *Lycidas*. Pastoralism, revived from these Greek and Latin sources, became one of the most fascinating literary features of the Renaissance. In Italy during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it grew in profusion, and thence its pretty flowers were transplanted into every country reached by the Renaissance movement. Sidney and Spenser introduced it into English literature, and all of their successors were tempted now and then into the Arcadian fields by the song and laughter of piping shepherds and short-kirtled

shepherdesses. The pastoral element appeared in every form of imaginative literature, in the prose romance like Sidney's *Arcadia* and Lodge's *Rosalynde*, in the drama, as in *As You Like It* and Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, in the epic as in the sixth book of the *Faerie Queene*, in love sonnets like Lodge's *Pastoral Sonnets* in honor of *Phyllis*, and especially in the pastoral songs of Marlowe, Greene, Breton, Campion, Herrick, Marvell, and many another, whose bright strains like the songs of birds in spring enlivened the whole age with the gladness of nature's own rhythms.

It was quite natural that Milton, a child of the Renaissance, should be attracted by this form of poetic expression. Its classic antecedents and the artistic possibilities of conventional phrasings would both appeal to him. Although *Lycidas* is his only consistent pastoral, he uses the pastoral coloring in nearly all of his early poetry, in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, *Arcades*, *Comus*; there is even a touch of it in the *Nativity Hymn*. But of all poetic forms the pastoral is the most remote and artificial, and it therefore still puzzles the unimaginative to see how it can be the medium of expressing genuine feeling, especially elegiac feeling. Thus Dr. Johnson, with purblind confidence in his eighteenth-century "sense," balked at the pastoral phraseology of *Lycidas* and condemned the poem as nonsense. If, however, we had not Shelley's *Adonais* and Arnold's *Thyrsis* in clear proof of the point, a proper appreciation of *Lycidas* would prove the effectiveness of the pastoral for expressing profound feeling.

But for this serious use of the pastoral Milton had ample precedent. Originally the pastoral poets piped only of the simple and happy bucolic life of an ideal Arcady. Theocritus once departed from the convention with a suggestion of the elegy. Moschus vitalized the suggestion in his lament for his master Bion. Vergil added to the subject-matter of the pastoral the realities of ordinary daily life, and in the fifth and tenth *Eclogues* gave examples of the elegiac use of the form. Petrarch and Boccaccio discovered in the pastoral the oppor-

tunity for delicately veiled satire of church and state. In the *Shepherd's Calendar*, Spenser still further humanized the conventional Corydons and Phillises, and at the death of his friend Sidney he wrote *Astrophel: A Pastorall Elegie*. What more natural, therefore, than that Milton should take up the pastoral where it was left by Spenser, whom according to the testimony of Dryden he acknowledged to be his master. All of the elements of *Lycidas*, allegory, symbolism, rustic life, nature poetry, sorrow, pathos, satiric invective, had been abundantly exemplified in previous literature; with the instinctive perception of true genius he saw the possibility of a higher employment of these elements, and so with the deftness of superior workmanship, as well as through the force of loftier thought, he perfected and established the highest type of elegiac poetry.

Of the versification of *Lycidas* Masson says: "The art of the verse is a study in itself. The lines are mostly the common iambics of five feet, but every now and then there is an exquisitely managed variation of a short line of three iambs. Then the interlinking and intertwining of the rhymes, sometimes in pairs, sometimes in threes, or even fives, and at all varieties of intervals, from that of the contiguous couplet to that of an unobserved chime or stanza of some length, are positive perfection. Occasionally, too, there is a line that does not rhyme; and in every such case, though the rhyme is never missed by the reader's ear, in so much music is the line bedded, yet a delicate artistic reason may be detected or fancied for its formal absence. The first line of all is one instance; we shall leave the reader to find out the others."

Palgrave remarks that *Lycidas* "may be regarded as a test of any reader's insight into the most poetical aspects of poetry." It is undoubtedly, like the *Faerie Queene*, a poet's poem rather than a people's poem; but it would be a poor soul indeed that was not moved at some point by its varied beauty. Dr. Garnett thinks that *Lycidas* is surpassed "by the other great English masterpiece, *Adonais*, in fire and grandeur." "But

the balance is redressed by the fact that the beauties of *Adonais* are of the imitable sort, and those of *Lycidas* of the inimitable. Shelley's eloquence is even too splendid for elegy. It wants the dainty thrills and tremors of subtle versification, and the witcheries of verbal magic in which *Lycidas* is so rich."

"In the development of the Miltonic genius," says Pattison, "this wonderful dirge marks the culminating point. As the twin idyls of 1632 show a great advance upon the *Ode on the Nativity* (1629), the growth of the poetic mind during the five years which follow 1632 is registered in *Lycidas*. Like *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, *Lycidas* is laid out on the lines of the accepted pastoral fiction; like them it offers exquisite touches of idealized rural life. But *Lycidas* opens up a deeper vein of feeling, a patriot passion so vehement and dangerous that, like that which stirred the Hebrew prophet, it is compelled to veil itself from power, or from sympathy, in utterance made purposely enigmatical. . . . In *Lycidas* Milton's original picturesque vein is for the first time crossed with one of quite another sort, stern, determined, obscurely indicative of suppressed passion, and the resolution to do or die. The fanaticism of the covenanter and the sad grace of Petrarch seem to meet in Milton's monody. Yet these opposites, instead of neutralizing each other, are blended into one harmonious whole by the presiding, but invisible, genius of the poet. The conflict between the old cavalier world—the years of gayety and festivity of a splendid and pleasure-loving court, and the new Puritan world into which love and pleasure were not to enter—this conflict which was commencing in the social life of England, is also begun in Milton's own breast, and is reflected in *Lycidas*. . . . For a moment, the tones of both ages, the past and the coming, are combined, and then Milton leaves behind him forever the golden age and one-half of his poetic genius."

The most important personal relic of Milton now extant is the collection of original manuscripts, in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge. This precious volume is preserved in a glass case, and can be removed only by order of the Master and

Fellows, and in the presence of one of the Fellows. In 1899 its contents were generously made available by photographic reproduction. Among these manuscripts is the original copy of *Lycidas*, revealing many careful corrections and refinements of the text. The most interesting of these changes will be found in the notes.

THE SONNETS

OF Milton's sonnets Dr. Johnson wrote: "They deserve not any particular criticism; for of the best it can only be said that they are not bad." This famous judgment is historically valuable, as indicating the inability of the eighteenth century to understand the sonnet. It was not until Wordsworth that a successor to Shakspeare and Milton appeared in this difficult and exquisite form of poetic composition. In his sonnet on the sonnet, "Scorn not the Sonnet," Wordsworth said of Milton:

" When a damp
Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
The Thing became a trumpet; whence he blew
Soul-animating strains—alas, too few! "

During the period in which Milton was fighting with the sword of Gideon in the political field, the few sonnets—seventeen in the period from 1642 to 1658—represent the only consoling use that he made of "that one talent which is death to hide." Nearly all are personal in theme, and in expression "stately, rugged, or graceful, as he pleased to make them, some like Hebrew psalms, others having the classic ease of Horace, some even tender as Milton could gravely be." They form the connecting link between the rich and radiant poetic impulses of his early years and the sublime loneliness of *Paradise Lost*, when each new day brought back his night.

The sonnet may be briefly defined as a complete poem in fourteen pentameter lines of verse. It requires the employment of an intricate rhyme scheme and the adequate expression of a complete thought or emotion within these circumscribed limits,

and these requirements constitute the chief difficulties of its composition. The form was brought from Italy to England by Wyatt and Surrey. In their experimenting, especially Surrey's, the true Italian form was much modified, and a simpler form became current among the Elizabethans, consisting of three quite independent quatrains with alternate rhymes, and a rhymed couplet at the close. This type was adopted, perfected, and established by Shakspeare. Milton restored the Petrarchian model, consisting of two unequal parts or systems, the major system of eight lines, or octave, having two rhymes in a fixed arrangement, and the minor system of six lines, or sextet, having generally three rhymes variously arranged, though seldom with a rhymed couplet at the close. In the sonnet *On his Blindness*, for example, the rhyme scheme may thus be represented: *a b b a a b b a c d e c d c*. In *To Mr. H. Lawes* the scheme of the minor part is: *c d e d c e*, and in *On the Late Massacre in Piedmont* there are but two rhymes, arranged: *c d c d c d*. One feature of the Petrarchian sonnet, the slight pause in the thought and melody at the close of the octave, Milton did not observe, preferring to have no other break in the continuity of expression than that afforded by the rhyme scheme.

Thus we have two well-defined types of the English sonnet, the Shakspearean sonnet, sometimes regarded as the native English type, and the Miltonic sonnet, modeled from the Italian sonnets of the Renaissance. Both forms have served as models for the modern sonneteers, the Miltonic influence more generally prevailing, as with Wordsworth and Mrs. Browning, leading ultimately, however, to the adoption of the pure Italian types, as by Rossetti. In another respect Milton's sonnets mark an epoch in sonnet writing. Hitherto the theme of the sonnet had been almost exclusively love, so that throughout the Elizabethan period "sugred sonettes" came to be generally descriptive of all amatory effusions. In the hands of the inferior poets of the next period it degenerated rapidly toward florid insipidity. Milton raised it to a new dignity by extending its theme,

securing for it a free charter to the whole realm of intense human interest, and in this freedom, from the beginning of the nineteenth century, the sonnet has flourished in pleasingly varied beauty and power.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CLASS-ROOM WORK

THE poems should be read aloud by teacher and students, day by day, until the melody of the verse is thoroughly absorbed by the student consciousness.

Analyze the metrical form of each poem, and discover the poet's reasons for the frequent variation in the fundamental metrical scheme.

Make a table of the parallelisms, or corresponding passages, in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*.

Trace the events of the day (twenty-four hours) in each poem. Is Milton describing an ideal or real day? Give arguments for each supposition.

Make lists of the pictures of natural scenes in these poems, such as an artist might use if he were illustrating the poems.

Make a special study of Milton's epithets. Justify Macaulay's statement, "Every epithet is a text for a canto."

Find instances of Milton's inaccuracy or inconsistency in the description of natural objects.

Look for any evidences of puritanism in these poems.

Note the different meters in *Comus*, and those that had been used in previous poems. Account for the passage of rhymed couplets, lines 495-510.

Discuss the relations of *Comus* to contemporary political and social conditions. Compare it with *Lycidas* in this respect.

Give reasons for regarding *Comus* as lyric rather than as dramatic poetry.

Discuss the personal element in *Lycidas*; Milton's feeling toward Edward King, his feeling toward the clergy, and his feeling toward his own poet's profession.

Do the two interposed passages of personal feeling mar the artistic unity of *Lycidas*, or does Milton fully harmonize them with his main theme by artistic treatment?

Note the unrhymed lines in *Lycidas*, and discover, if possible, the "delicate artistic reason" which Masson fancies Milton had in mind for each omission of the rhyme.

Compare Milton's sonnet structure with that of Spenser (*Amoretti*), Shakspeare, Wordsworth, and Rossetti.

Read the rest of Milton's sonnets, and find what justification there may be for Dr. Johnson's severe judgment.

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POEMS

ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY

I

THIS is the month, and this the happy morn,
Wherein the Son of Heaven's eternal King,
Of wedded maid and virgin mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring;
For so the holy sages once did sing, 5
That he our deadly forfeit should release,
And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.

II

That glorious form, that light unsufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of majesty,
Wherewith he wont at Heaven's high-council table 10
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside; and, here with us to be,
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.

III

Say, Heavenly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein 15
Afford a present to the Infant God?
Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain,
To welcome him to this his new abode,

Now while the Heaven, by the Sun's team untrod,
 Hath took no print of the approaching light. 20
 And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons
 bright?

IV

See how from far upon the eastern road
 The star-led wizards haste with odors sweet!
 O, run; prevent them with thy humble ode,
 And lay it lowly at his blessèd feet; 25
 Have thou the honor first thy Lord to greet.
 And join thy voice unto the angel quire,
 From out his secret altar touched with hallowed fire.

THE HYMN

I

It was the winter wild,
 While the Heaven-born child 30
 All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lies;
 Nature, in awe to him,
 Had doffed her gaudy trim,
 With her great Master so to sympathize;
 It was no season then for her 35
 To wanton with the Sun, her lusty paramour.

II

Only with speeches fair
 She woos the gentle air,
 To hide her guilty front with innocent snow,
 And on her naked shame, 40
 Pollute with sinful blame,

The saintly veil of maiden white to throw;
Confounded, that her Maker's eyes
Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

III

But he, her fears to cease, 45
Sent down the meek-eyed Peace;
She, crowned with olive green, came softly sliding
Down through the turning sphere,
His ready harbinger,
With turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing; 50
And, waving wide her myrtle wand,
She strikes a universal peace through sea and land.

IV

No war, or battle's sound,
Was heard the world around;
The idle spear and shield were high uphung; 55
The hookèd chariot stood
Unstained with hostile blood;
The trumpet spake not to the armèd throng;
And kings sat still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their sovran Lord was by. 60

V

But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of Light
His reign of peace upon the earth began.
The winds, with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kissed, 65
Whispering new joys to the mild ocean,

Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed wave.

VI

The stars, with deep amaze,
Stand fixed in steadfast gaze, 70
 Bending one way their precious influence,
And will not take their flight,
For all the morning light,
 Or Lucifer that often warned them thence;
But in their glimmering orbs did glow, 75
Until their Lord himself bespake, and bid them go.

VII

And, though the shady gloom
Had given day her room,
 The Sun himself withheld his wonted speed,
And hid his head for shame, 80
As his inferior flame
 The new-enlightened world no more should need;
He saw a greater Sun appear
Than his bright throne or burning axletree could bear.

VIII

The shepherds on the lawn, 85
Or ere the point of dawn,
 Sat simply chatting in a rustic row;
Full little thought they than
That the mighty Pan
 Was kindly come to live with them below; 90

Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep.

IX

When such music sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet
As never was by mortal finger strook, 95
Divinely-warbled voice
Answering the stringed noise,
As all their souls in blissful rapture took;
The air, such pleasure loath to lose,
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly
close. 100

X

Nature, that heard such sound
Beneath the hollow round
Of Cynthia's seat the airy region thrilling,
Now was almost won
To think her part was done, 105
And that her reign had here its last fulfilling;
She knew such harmony alone
Could hold all heaven and earth in happier union.

XI

At last surrounds their sight
A globe of circular light, 110
That with long beams the shame-faced Night arrayed;
The helmèd Cherubim,
The sworded Seraphim

Are seen in glittering ranks with wings displayed,
Harping in loud and solemn quire, 115
With unexpressive notes, to Heaven's new-born Heir.

XII

Such music (as 'tis said)
Before was never made
But when of old the Sons of Morning sung,
While the Creator great 120
His constellations set,
And the well-balanced world on hinges hung,
And cast the dark foundations deep,
And bid the weltering waves their oozy channel keep.

XIII

Ring out, ye crystal spheres! 125
Once bless our human ears,
If ye have power to touch our senses so;
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time,
And let the base of Heaven's deep organ blow; 130
And with your ninefold harmony
Make up full consort to the angelic symphony.

XIV

For, if such holy song
Enwrap our fancy long,
Time will run back, and fetch the age of gold; 135
And speckled Vanity
Will sicken soon and die,
And leprous Sin will melt from earthly mold;

And Hell itself will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day. 140

XV

Yea, Truth and Justice then
Will down return to men,
Orbed in a rainbow; and, like glories wearing,
Mercy will sit between,
Throned in celestial sheen, . 145
With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering;
And Heaven, as at some festival,
Will open wide the gates of her high palace-hall.

XVI

But wisest Fate says no,
This must not yet be so; 150
The Babe lies yet in smiling infancy
That on the bitter cross
Must redeem our loss,
So both himself and us to glorify;
Yet first, to those ychained in sleep, 155
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through the
deep.

XVII

With such a horrid clang
As on Mount Sinai rang,
While the red fire and smoldering clouds outbrake;
The aged Earth, aghast, 160
With terror of that blast,
Shall from the surface to the center shake,

When at the world's last session
 The dreadful Judge in middle air shall spread his throne.

XVIII

And then at last our bliss 165
 Full and perfect is,
 But now begins; for from this happy day
 The Old Dragon under ground,
 In straiter limits bound,
 Not half so far casts his usurpèd sway, 170
 And, wroth to see his kingdom fail,
 Swinges the scaly horror of his folded tail.

XIX

The oracles are dumb;
 No voice or hideous hum
 Runs through the archèd roof in words deceiving. 175
 Apollo from his shrine
 Can no more divine,
 With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.
 No nightly trance, or breathèd spell,
 Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell. 180

XX

The lonely mountains o'er,
 And the resounding shore,
 A voice of weeping heard and loud lament;
 From haunted spring and dale
 Edged with poplar pale, 185
 The parting Genius is with sighing sent;

With flower-inwoven tresses torn
The Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets
mourn.

XXI

In consecrated earth,
And on the holy hearth, 190
The Lars and Lemures moan with midnight plaint;
In urns and altars round,
A drear and dying sound
Affrights the Flamens at their service quaint;
And the chill marble seems to sweat, 195
While each peculiar power foregoes his wonted seat.

XXII

Peor and Baälim
Forsake their temples dim,
With that twice-battered god of Palestine;
And moonèd Ashtaroth, 200
Heaven's queen and mother both,
Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine;
The Lybic Hammon shrinks his horn;
In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Thammuz
mourn.

XXIII

And sullen Moloch, fled, 205
Hath left in shadows dread
His burning idol all of blackest hue;
In vain with cymbals' ring
They call the grizzly king,

In dismal dance about the furnace blue; 210
The brutish gods of Nile as fast,
Isis and Orus and the dog Anubis, haste.

XXIV

Nor is Osiris seen
In Memphian grove or green,
Trampling the unshowered grass with lowings
loud, 215
Nor can he be at rest
Within his sacred chest;
Nought but profoundest Hell can be his shroud;
In vain, with timbreled anthems dark,
The sable-stolèd sorcerers bear his worshiped ark. 220

XXV

He feels from Juda's land
The dreaded Infant's hand;
The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyn;
Nor all the gods beside
Longer dare abide, 225
Not Typhon huge ending in snaky twine;
Our Babe, to show his Godhead true,
Can in his swaddling bands control the damnèd crew.

XXVI

So, when the sun in bed,
Curtained with cloudy red, 230
Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,
The flocking shadows pale
Troop to the infernal jail,

Each fettered ghost slips to his several grave,
 And the yellow-skirted fays 235
 Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-loved
 maze.

XXVII

But see! the Virgin blest
 Hath laid her Babe to rest.
 Time is our tedious song should here have ending;
 Heaven's youngest-teemed star 240
 Hath fixed her polished car,
 Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attending;
 And all about the courtly stable
 Bright-harnessed angels sit in order serviceable.

L'ALLEGRO

HENCE, loathèd Melancholy,
 Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born
 In Stygian cave forlorn,
 'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy!
 Find out some uncouth cell, 5
 Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous wings,
 And the night-raven sings;
 There under ebon shades and low-browed rocks,
 As ragged as thy locks,
 In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell. 10
 But come, thou goddess fair and free,
 In Heaven yclept Euphrosyne,

And by men heart-easing Mirth;
Whom lovely Venus, at a birth,
With two sister Graces more, 15
To ivy-crownèd Bacchus bore:
Or whether (as some sager sing)
The frolic wind that breathes the spring,
Zephyr, with Aurora playing,
As he met her once a-Maying, 20
There on beds of violets blue,
And fresh-blown roses washed in dew,
Filled her with thee, a daughter fair,
So buxom, blithe, and debonair.
Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee 25
Jest and youthful jollity,
Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,
Nods and becks and wreathèd smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek; 30
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.
Come, and trip it as you go,
On the light fantastic toe;
And in thy right hand lead with thee 35
The mountain-nymph, sweet Liberty;
And if I give thee honor due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,
To live with her, and live with thee
In unprovèd pleasures free; 40
To hear the lark begin his flight,
And, singing, startle the dull night,

From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise;
Then to come, in spite of sorrow, 45
And at my window bid good morrow,
Through the sweetbrier or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine;
While the cock, with lively din,
Scatters the rear of darkness thin, 50
And to the stack, or the barn door,
Stoutly struts his dames before:
Oft listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,
From the side of some hoar hill, 55
Through the high wood echoing shrill:
Sometime walking, not unseen,
By hedgerow elms, on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate
Where the great sun begins his state, 60
Robed in flames and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight;
While the plowman, near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe, 65
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.
Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
Whilst the landskip round it measures: 70
Russet lawns and fallows gray,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray;

Mountains on whose barren breast
The laboring clouds do often rest;
Meadows trim with daisies pied, 75
Shallow brooks and rivers wide;
Towers and battlements it sees
Bosomed high in tufted trees,
Where perhaps some beauty lies,
The Cynosure of neighboring eyes. 80
Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes
From betwixt two aged oaks,
Where Corydon and Thyrsis met
Are at their savory dinner set
Of herbs and other country messes, 85
Which the neat-handed Phillis dresses;
And then in haste her bower she leaves,
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves;
Or, if the earlier season lead,
To the tanned haycock in the mead. 90
Sometimes with secure delight
The upland hamlets will invite,
When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks sound
To many a youth and many a maid, 95
Dancing in the chequered shade;
And young and old come forth to play
On a sunshine holiday,
Till the livelong daylight fail:
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale, 100
With stories told of many a feat,
How Faery Mab the junkets eat:

She was pinched and pulled, she said;
And he, by Friar's lantern led,
Tells how the drudging goblin sweat 105
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn
That ten day-laborers could not end;
Then lies him down, the lubber fiend, 110
And, stretched out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength;
And crop-full out of doors he flings,
Ere the first cock his matin rings.
Thus done the tales, to bed they creep, 115
By whispering winds soon lulled asleep.
Towered cities please us then,
And the busy hum of men,
Where throngs of knights and barons bold,
In weeds of peace, high triumphs hold, 120
With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence, and judge the prize
Of wit or arms, while both contend
To win her grace whom all commend.
There let Hymen oft appear 125
In saffron robe, with taper clear,
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With mask, and antique pageantry;
Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream. 130
Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learnèd sock be on,

Or sweetest Shakspeare, Fancy's child,
 Warble his native wood-notes wild.
 And ever, against eating cares, 135
 Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
 Married to immortal verse,
 Such as the meeting soul may pierce,
 In notes with many a winding bout
 Of linkèd sweetness long drawn out 140
 With wanton heed and giddy cunning,
 The melting voice through mazes running,
 Untwisting all the chains that tie
 The hidden soul of harmony;
 That Orpheus' self may heave his head 145
 From golden slumber on a bed
 Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear
 Such strains as would have won the ear
 Of Pluto to have quite set free
 His half-regained Eurydicè. 150
 These delights if thou canst give,
 Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

IL PENSEROSO

HENCE, vain deluding Joys,
 The brood of Folly without father bred!
 How little you bestead,
 Or fill the fixèd mind with all your toys!
 Dwell in some idle brain, 5
 And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,

/ As thick and numberless
 As the gay motes that people the sunbeams,
 Or likest hovering dreams,
 The fickle pensioners of Morpheus' train. 10
 But hail, thou goddess, sage and holy,
 Hail, divinest Melancholy!
 Whose saintly visage is too bright
 To hit the sense of human sight,
 And therefore to our weaker view 15
 O'erlaid with black, staid Wisdom's hue;
 Black, but such as in esteem
 Prince Memnon's sister might beseem,
 Or that starred Ethiop queen that strove
 To set her beauty's praise above 20
 The sea-nymphs', and their powers offended.
 Yet thou art higher far descended:
 Thee bright-hair'd Vesta long of yore
 To solitary Saturn bore;
 His daughter she; in Saturn's reign, 25
 Such mixture was not held a stain.
 Oft in glimmering bowers and glades
 He met her, and in secret shades
 Of woody Ida's inmost grove,
 Whilst yet there was no fear of Jove. 30
 Come, pensive Nun, devout and pure,
 Sober, steadfast, and demure,
 All in a robe of darkest grain,
 Flowing with majestic train,
 And sable stole of cypress lawn, 35
 Over thy decent shoulders drawn.

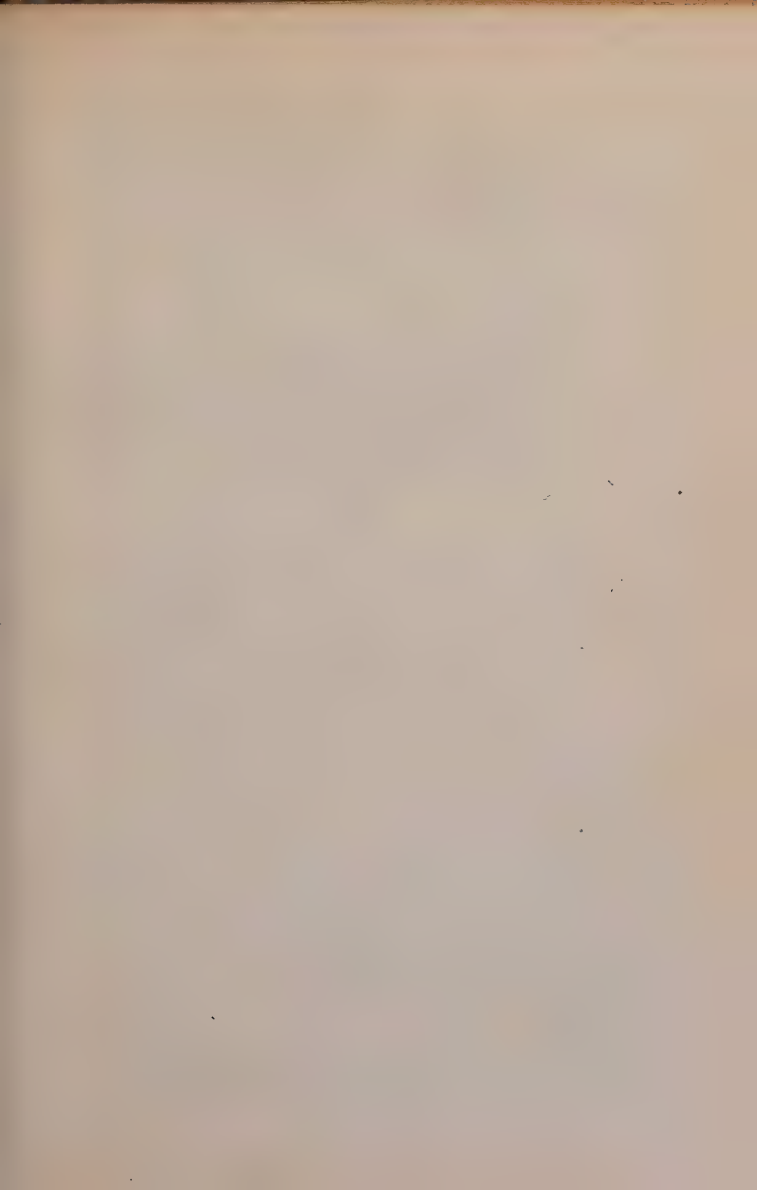
Come, but keep thy wonted state,
With even step, and musing gait,
And looks commercing with the skies,
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes: 40
There, held in holy passion still,
Forget thyself to marble, till
With a sad leaden downward cast
Thou fix them on the earth as fast.
And join with thee calm Peace, and Quiet, 45
Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet,
And hears the Muses in a ring
Aye round about Jove's altar sing;
And add to these retired Leisure,
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure; 50
But, first and chiefest, with thee bring
Him that yon soars on golden wing,
Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,
The Cherub Contemplation;
And the mute Silence hist along; 55
'Less Philomel will deign a song,
In her sweetest, saddest plight,
Smoothing the rugged brow of Night,
While Cynthia checks her dragon yoke
Gently o'er the accustomed oak. 60
Sweet bird, that shunn'st the noise of folly,
Most musical, most melancholy!
Thee, chauntress, oft the woods among
I woo, to hear thy even-song;
And, missing thee, I walk unseen 65
On the dry smooth-shaven green,

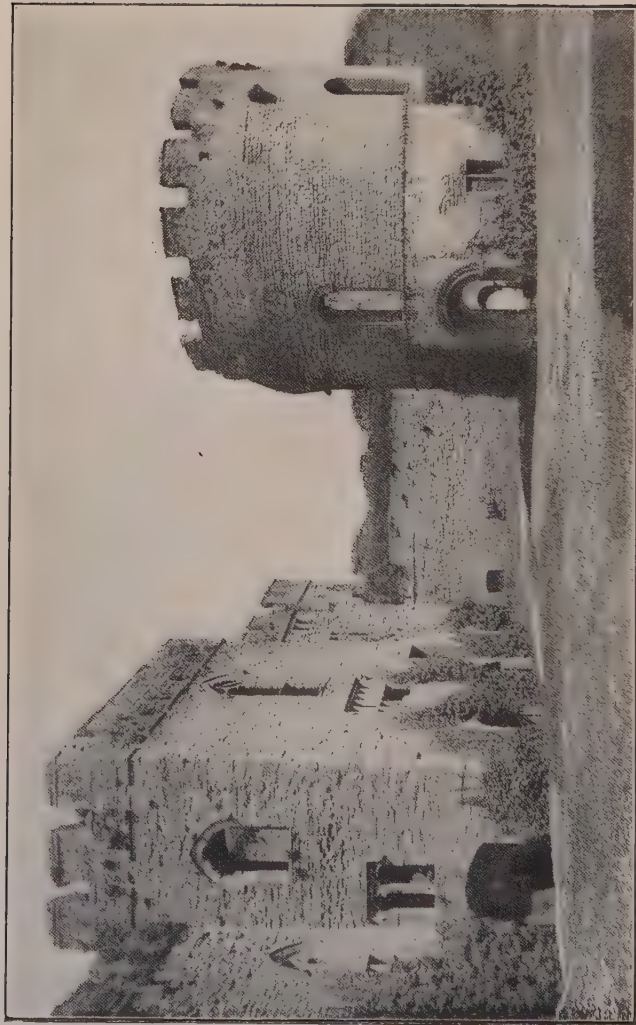
To behold the wandering moon,
 Riding near her highest noon,
 Like one that had been led astray
 Through the heaven's wide pathless way, 70
 And oft, as if her head she bowed,
 Stooping through a fleecy cloud.
 Oft, on a plat of rising ground,
 I hear the far-off curfew sound,
 Over some wide-watered shore, 75
 Swinging slow with sullen roar;
 Or, if the air will not permit,
 Some still removèd place will fit,
 Where glowing embers through the room
 Teach light to counterfeit a gloom, 80
 Far from all resort of mirth,
 Save the cricket on the hearth,
 Or the bellman's drowsy charm.
 To bless the doors from nightly harm.
 Or let my lamp at midnight hour 85
 Be seen in some high lonely tower,
 Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,
 With thrice-great Hermes, or unsphere
 The spirit of Plato, to unfold
 What worlds or what vast regions hold 90
 The immortal mind, that hath forsook
 Her mansion in this fleshly nook;
 And of those demons that are found
 In fire, air, flood, or under ground,
 Whose power hath a true consent 95
 With planet or with element.

Sometimes let gorgeous Tragedy
In scepter'd pall come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
Or the tale of Troy divine, 100
Or what (though rare) of later age
Ennobled hath the buskin'd stage.
But, O sad Virgin! that thy power
Might raise Musæus from his bower;
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing 105
Such notes as, warbled to the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made Hell grant what love did seek;
Or call up him that left half-told
The story of Cambuscan bold, 110
Of Camball and of Algarsife,
And who had Canacè to wife,
That owned the virtuous ring and glass,
And of the wondrous horse of brass
On which the Tartar king did ride; 115
And if aught else great bards beside
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
Of tourneys, and of trophies hung,
Of forests and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear. 120
Thus, Night, oft see me in thy pale career,
Till civil-suited Morn appear,
Not tricked and frownc'd, as she was wont
With the Attic boy to hunt,
But kerchieft in a comely cloud, 125
While rocking winds are piping loud,

Or ushered with a shower still,
 When the gust hath blown his fill,
 Ending on the rustling leaves,
 With minute-drops from off the eaves. 130
 And, when the sun begins to fling
 His flaring beams, me, Goddess, bring
 To archèd walks of twilight groves,
 And shadows brown, that Sylvan loves,
 Of pine, or monumental oak, 135
 Where the rude ax with heavèd stroke
 Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,
 Or fright them from their hallowed haunt.
 There, in close covert, by some brook,
 Where no profaner eye may look, 140
 Hide me from day's garish eye,
 While the bee with honeyed thigh,
 That at her flowery work doth sing,
 And the waters murmuring,
 With such consort as they keep, 145
 Entice the dewy-feathered Sleep;
 And let some strange mysterious Dream
 Wave at his wings, in airy stream
 Of lively portraiture displayed,
 Softly on my eyelids laid; 150
 And, as I wake, sweet music breathe
 Above, about, or underneath,
 Sent by some Spirit to mortals good,
 Or the unseen Genius of the wood.
 But let my due feet never fail 155
 To walk the studious cloister's pale,

And love the high embowèd roof,
With antique pillars massy-proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light. 160
There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full-voiced quire below,
In service high, and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies, 165
And bring all heaven before mine eyes.
And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell 170
Of every star that heaven doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew,
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.
These pleasures, Melancholy, give, 175
And I with thee will choose to live.





LUDLOW CASTLE

The window at the extreme left is that of the hall in which Comus was performed

COMUS

THE PERSONS

The ATTENDANT SPIRIT, afterwards in the habit of THYRSIS.
COMUS, with his Crew.

THE LADY.

FIRST BROTHER.

SECOND BROTHER.

SABRINA, the Nymph.

The Chief Persons which presented were:

The Lord Brackley;
Mr. Thomas Egerton, his Brother;
The Lady Alice Egerton.

COMUS

The first Scene discovers a wild wood

The ATTENDANT SPIRIT descends or enters

BEFORE the starry threshold of Jove's court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aërial spirits live insphered
In regions mild of calm and serene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot 5
Which men call Earth, and, with low-thoughted care,
Confined and pestered in this pinfold here,
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
Unmindful of the crown that Virtue gives,
After this mortal change, to her true servants 10

Amongst the enthroned gods on sainted seats.
Yet some there be that by due steps aspire
To lay their just hands on that golden key
That opes the palace of eternity.

To such my errand is; and, but for such, 15
I would not soil these pure ambrosial weeds
With the rank vapors of this sin-worn mold.

But to my task. Neptune, besides the sway
Of every salt flood and each ebbing stream,
Took in, by lot 'twixt high and nether Jove, 20
Imperial rule of all the sea-girt isles
That, like to rich and various gems, inlay
The unadornèd bosom of the deep;

Which he, to grace his tributary gods,
By course commits to several government, 25

And gives them leave to wear their sapphire crowns
And wield their little tridents. But this Isle,
The greatest and the best of all the main,
He quarters to his blue-haired deities;
And all this tract that fronts the falling sun 30

A noble Peer of mickle trust and power
Has in his charge, with tempered awe to guide
An old and haughty nation, proud in arms:
Where his fair offspring, nursed in princely lore,
Are coming to attend their father's state, 35

And new-intrusted scepter. But their way
Lies through the perplexed paths of this drear wood,
The nodding horror of whose shady brows
Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger;
And here their tender age might suffer peril, 40

But that, by quick command from sovran Jove,
I was dispatched for their defense and guard!
And listen why; for I will tell you now
What never yet was heard in tale or song,
From old or modern bard, in hall or bower. 45

Bacchus, that first from out the purple grape
Crushed the sweet poison of misused wine,
After the Tuscan mariners transformed,
Coasting the Tyrrhene shore, as the winds listed,
On Circe's island fell. (Who knows not Circe, 50
The daughter of the Sun, whose charmed cup
Whoever tasted lost his upright shape
And downward fell into a groveling swine?)
This Nymph, that gazed upon his clustering locks
With ivy berries wreathed, and his blithe youth, 55
Had by him, ere he parted thence, a son
Much like his father, but his mother more,
Whom therefore she brought up, and Comus named:
Who, ripe and frolic of his full-grown age,
Roving the Celtic and Iberian fields, 60
At last betakes him to this ominous wood,
And, in thick shelter of black shades embowered,
Excels his mother at her mighty art;
Offering to every weary traveler
His orient liquor in a crystal glass, 65
To quench the drought of Phœbus; which as they taste
(For most do taste through fond intemperate thirst),
Soon as the potion works, their human countenance,
The express resemblance of the gods, is changed
Into some brutish form of wolf or bear, 70

Or ounce or tiger, hog, or bearded goat,
 All other parts remaining as they were.
 And they, so perfect is their misery,
 Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,
 But boast themselves more comely than before, 75
 And all their friends and native home forget,
 To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.
 Therefore, when any favored of high Jove
 Chances to pass through this adventurous glade,
 Swift as the sparkle of a glancing star 80
 I shoot from heaven, to give him safe convoy,
 As now I do. But first I must put off
 These my sky-robes spun out of Iris' woof,
 And take the weeds and likeness of a swain
 That to the service of this house belongs, 85
 Who, with his soft pipe and smooth-dittied song,
 Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,
 And hush the waving woods; nor of less faith,
 And in this office of his mountain watch
 Likeliest, and nearest to the present aid 90
 Of this occasion. But I hear the tread
 Of hateful steps; I must be viewless now.

COMUS enters, with a charming-rod in one hand, his glass in the other; with him a rout of monsters, headed like sundry sorts of wild beasts, but otherwise like men and women, their apparel glistening. They come in making a riotous and unruly noise, with torches in their hands

Comus. The star that bids the shepherd fold
 Now the top of heaven doth hold;

And the gilded car of day
His glowing axle doth allay
In the steep Atlantic stream:
And the slope sun his upward beam
Shoots against the dusky pole,
Pacing toward the other goal
Of his chamber in the east. 100
Meanwhile, welcome joy and feast,
Midnight shout and revelry,
Tipsy dance and jollity.
Braid your locks with rosy twine,
Dropping odors, dropping wine. 105
Rigor now is gone to bed;
And Advice with scrupulous head,
Strict Age, and sour Severity,
With their grave saws, in slumber lie. 110
We, that are of purer fire,
Imitate the starry quire,
Who, in their nightly watchful spheres,
Lead in swift round the months and years.
The sounds and seas, with all their finny drove, 115
Now to the moon in wavering morrice move;
And on the tawny sands and shelves
Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves.
By dimpled brook and fountain-brim,
The wood-nymphs, decked with daisies trim, 120
Their merry wakes and pastimes keep:
What hath night to do with sleep?
Night hath better sweets to prove;
Venus now wakes, and wakens Love.

Come, let us our rites begin; 125
'Tis only daylight that makes sin,
Which these dun shades will ne'er report.
Hail, goddess of nocturnal sport,
Dark-veiled Cotytto, to whom the secret flame
Of midnight torches burns! mysterious dame, 130
That ne'er art called but when the dragon womb
Of Stygian darkness spets her thickest gloom,
And makes one blot of all the air!
Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,
Wherein thou rid'st with Hecat', and befriend 135
Us thy vowed priests, till utmost end
Of all thy dues be done, and none left out
Ere the blabbing eastern scout,
The nice Morn on the Indian steep,
From her cabined loophole peep, 140
And to the telltale Sun descry
Our concealed solemnity.
Come, knit hands, and beat the ground
In a light fantastic round.

The Measure

Break off, break off! I feel the different pace 145
Of some chaste footing near about this ground.
Run to your shrouds within these brakes and trees;
Our number may affright. Some virgin sure
(For so I can distinguish by mine art)
Benighted in these woods! Now to my charms, 150
And to my wily trains: I shall ere long

Be well stocked with as fair a herd as grazed
About my mother Circe. Thus I hurl
My dazzling spells into the spongy air,
Of power to cheat the eye with blear illusion, 155
And give it false presentments, lest the place
And my quaint habits breed astonishment,
And put the damsel to suspicious flight;
Which must not be, for that's against my course.
I, under fair pretense of friendly ends, 160
And well-placed words of glozing courtesy,
Baited with reasons not unplausible,
Wind me into the easy-hearted man,
And hug him into snares. When once her eye
Hath met the virtue of this magic dust 165
I shall appear some harmless villager,
Whom thrift keeps up about his country gear.
But here she comes; I fairly step aside,
And hearken, if I may her business hear.

The LADY enters

Lady. This way the noise was, if mine ear be true,
My best guide now. Methought it was the sound 171
Of riot and ill-managed merriment,
Such as the jocund flute or gamesome pipe
Stirs up among the loose unlettered hinds,
When, for their teeming flocks and granges full, 175
In wanton dance they praise the bounteous Pan,
And thank the gods amiss. I should be loath
To meet the rudeness and swilled insolence
Of such late wassailers; yet, oh! where else

Shall I inform my unacquainted feet 180
In the blind mazes of this tangled wood?
My brothers, when they saw me wearied out
With this long way, resolving here to lodge
Under the spreading favor of these pines,
Stepped, as they said, to the next thicket-side 185
To bring me berries, or such cooling fruit
As the kind hospitable woods provide.
They left me then when the gray-hooded Even,
Like a sad votarist in palmer's weed,
Rose from the hindmost wheels of Phœbus' wain. 190
But where they are, and why they come not back,
Is now the labor of my thoughts. 'Tis likeliest
They had engaged their wandering steps too far;
And envious darkness, ere they could return,
Had stole them from me. Else, O thievish Night, 195
Why should'st thou, but for some felonious end,
In thy dark lantern thus close up the stars
That Nature hung in heaven, and filled their lamps
With everlasting oil, to give due light
To the misled and lonely traveler? 200
This is the place, as well as I may guess,
Whence even now the tumult of loud mirth
Was rife, and perfect in my listening ear;
Yet nought but single darkness do I find.
What might this be? A thousand fantasies 205
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,
And airy tongues that syllable men's names
On sands and shores and desert wildernesses.

These thoughts may startle well, but not astound 210
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong siding champion, Conscience.
O, welcome, pure-eyed Faith, white-handed Hope,
Thou hovering angel girt with golden wings,
And thou unblemished form of Chastity! 215
I see ye visibly, and now believe
That He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,
To keep my life and honor unassailed.— 220
Was I deceived, or did a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night?
I did not err: there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove. 225
I cannot halloo to my brothers, but
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest
I'll venture; for my new-enlivened spirits
Prompt me, and they perhaps are not far off.

Song

Sweet echo, sweetest nymph, that liv'st unseen 230
 Within thy airy shell
 By slow Meander's margent green,
And in the violet-embroidered vale
 Where the lovelorn nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well: 235
Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair

That likest thy Narcissus are?
O, if thou have
Hid them in some flowery cave,
Tell me but where, 240
Sweet Queen of Parley, Daughter of the Sphere!
So may'st thou be translated to the skies,
And give resounding grace to all Heaven's harmonies!

Comus. Can any mortal mixture of earth's mold
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment? 245
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence.
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night, 250
At every fall smoothing the raven down
Of darkness till it smiled! I have oft heard
My mother Circe with the Sirens three,
Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,
Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs, 255
Who, as they sung, would take the prisoned soul,
And lap it in Elysium: Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmured soft applause.
Yet they in pleasing slumber lulled the sense, 260
And in sweet madness robbed it of itself;
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now. I'll speak to her,
And she shall be my queen.—Hail, foreign wonder! 265

Whom certain these rough shades did never breed,
Unless the goddess that in rural shrine
Dwell'st here with Pan or Sylvan, by blest song
Forbidding every bleak unkindly fog
To touch the prosperous growth of this tall wood. 270

Lady. Nay, gentle shepherd, ill is lost that praise
That is addressed to unattending ears.
Not any boast of skill, but extreme shift
How to regain my severed company,
Compelled me to awake the courteous Echo 275
To give me answer from her mossy couch.

Comus. What chance, good Lady, hath bereft you
thus?

Lady. Dim darkness and this leavy labyrinth.

Comus. Could that divide you from near-ushering
guides?

Lady. They left me weary on a grassy turf. 280

Comus. By falsehood, or discourtesy, or why?

Lady. To seek i' the valley some cool friendly
spring.

Comus. And left your fair side all unguarded,
Lady?

Lady. They were but twain, and purposed quick
return.) 284

Comus. Perhaps forestalling night prevented them.

Lady. How easy my misfortune is to hit!

Comus. Imports their loss, beside the present need?

Lady. No less than if I should my brothers lose.

Comus. Were they of manly prime, or youthful
bloom?

Lady. As smooth as Hebe's their unrazored lips.

Comus. Two such I saw, what time the labored
ox 291

In his loose traces from the furrow came,
And the swinked hedger at his supper sat.
I saw them under a green mantling vine,
That crawls along the side of yon small hill, 295
Plucking ripe clusters from the tender shoots;
Their port was more than human, as they stood.
I took it for a faery vision
Of some gay creatures of the element,
That in the colors of the rainbow live, 300
And play i' the plighted clouds. I was awe-strook,
And, as I passed, I worshiped. If those you seek,
It were a journey like the path to Heaven
To help you find them.

Lady. Gentle villager,
What readiest way would bring me to that place? 305

Comus. Due west it rises from this shrubby point.

Lady. To find out that, good shepherd, I suppose,
In such a scant allowance of starlight,
Would overtask the best land-pilot's art,
Without the sure guess of well-practised feet. 310

Comus. I know each lane, and every alley green,
Dingle, or bushy dell, of this wild wood,
And every bosky bourn from side to side,
My daily walks and ancient neighborhood;
And, if your stray attendance be yet lodged, 315
Or shroud within these limits, I shall know
Ere morrow wake, or the low-roosted lark

From her thatched pallet rouse. If otherwise,
 I can conduct you, Lady, to a low
 But loyal cottage, where you may be safe 320
 Till further quest.

Lady. Shepherd, I take thy word,
 And trust thy honest-offered courtesy,
 Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds,
 With smoky rafters, than in tapestry halls
 And courts of princes, where it first was named, 325
 And yet is most pretended. In a place
 Less warranted than this, or less secure,
 I cannot be, that I should fear to change it.
 Eye me, blest Providence, and square my trial
 To my proportioned strength! Shepherd, lead on. 330

†

The Two BROTHERS

Eld. Bro. Unmuffle, ye faint stars; and thou, fair
 moon,
 That wont'st to love the traveler's benison,
 Stoop thy pale visage through an amber cloud,
 And disinherit Chaos, that reigns here
 In double night of darkness and of shades; 335
 Or, if your influence be quite dammed up
 With black usurping mists, some gentle taper,
 Though a rush-candle from the wicker hole
 Of some clay habitation, visit us
 With thy long leveled rule of streaming light, 340
 And thou shalt be our star of Arcady,
 Or Tyrian Cynosure.

Sec. Bro. Or, if our eyes
 Be barred that happiness, might we but hear
 The folded flocks, penned in their wattled cotes,
 Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops, 345
 Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
 Count the night-watches to his feathery dames,
 'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering,
 In this close dungeon of innumerable boughs.
 But, oh, that hapless virgin, our lost sister! 350
 Where may she wander now, whither betake her
 From the chill dew, amongst rude burs and thistles?
 Perhaps some cold bank is her bolster now,
 Or 'gainst the rugged bark of some broad elm
 Leans her unpillow'd head, fraught with sad fears. 355
 What if in wild amazement and affright,
 Or, while we speak, within the direful grasp
 Of savage hunger, or of savage heat!

Eld. Bro. Peace, brother: be not over-exquisite
 To cast the fashion of uncertain evils; 360
 For, grant they be so, while they rest unknown,
 What need a man forestall his date of grief,
 And run to meet what he would most avoid?
 Or, if they be but false alarms of fear,
 How bitter is such self-delusion! 365
 I do not think my sister so to seek,
 Or so unprincipled in virtue's book,
 And the sweet peace that goodness bosoms ever,
 As that the single want of light and noise
 (Not being in danger, as I trust she is not) 370
 Could stir the constant mood of her calm thoughts,

And put them into misbecoming plight.
Virtue could see to do what Virtue would
By her own radiant light, though sun and moon
Were in the flat sea sunk. And Wisdom's self 375
Oft seeks to sweet retired solitude,
Where, with her best nurse Contemplation,
She plumes her feathers, and lets grow her wings,
That, in the various bustle of resort,
Were all to-ruffled, and sometimes impaired. 380
He that has light within his own clear breast
May sit i' the center, and enjoy bright day:
But he that hides a dark soul and foul thoughts
Benighted walks under the midday sun;
Himself is his own dungeon.

Sec. Bro. 'Tis most true 385
That musing Meditation most affects
The pensive secrecy of desert cell,
Far from the cheerful haunt of men and herds,
And sits as safe as in a senate-house;
For who would rob a hermit of his weeds, 390
His few books, or his beads, or maple dish,
Or do his gray hairs any violence?
But Beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree
Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
Of dragon-watch with unenchanted eye 395
To save her blossoms, and defend her fruit,
From the rash hand of bold Incontinence.
You may as well spread out the unsunned heaps
Of miser's treasure by an outlaw's den,
And tell me it is safe, as bid me hope 400

Yea, there where very desolation dwells,
By grotts and caverns shagged with horrid shades,
She may pass on with unblenched majesty, 430
Be it not done in pride, or in presumption.
Some say no evil thing that walks by night,
In fog or fire, by lake or moorish fen,
Blue meager hag, or stubborn unlaidd ghost,
That breaks his magic chains at curfew time, 435
No goblin or swart faery of the mine,
Hath hurtful power o'er true virginity.
Do ye believe me yet, or shall I call
Antiquity from the old schools of Greece
To testify the arms of chastity? 440
Hence had the huntress Dian her dread bow,
Fair silver-shafted queen forever chaste,
Wherewith she tamed the brindled lioness
And spotted mountain-pard, but set at nought
The frivolous bolt of Cupid; gods and men 445
Feared her stern frown, and she was queen o' the woods.
What was that snaky-headed Gorgon shield
That wise Minerva wore, unconquered virgin,
Wherewith she freezed her foes to congealed stone,
But rigid looks of chaste austerity, 450
And noble grace that dashed brute violence
With sudden adoration and blank awe?
So dear to Heaven is saintly chastity
That, when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lackey her, 455
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,
And in clear dream and solemn vision

Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear;
 Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
 Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape, 460
 The unpolluted temple of the mind,
 And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,
 Till all be made immortal. But, when lust,
 By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
 But most by lewd and lavish act of sin, 465
 Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
 The soul grows clotted by contagion,
 Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose
 The divine property of her first being.
 Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp 470
 Oft seen in charnel-vaults and sepulchers,
 Linger and sitting by a new-made grave,
 As loath to leave the body that it loved,
 And linked itself by carnal sensuality
 To a degenerate and degraded state. 475

Sec. Bro. How charming is divine Philosophy!
 Not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,
 But musical as is Apollo's lute,
 And a perpetual feast of nectared sweets,
 Where no crude surfeit reigns. 480

Eld Bro. List! list! I hear
 Some far-off halloo break the silent air.

Sec. Bro. Methought so too; what should it be?

Eld. Bro. For certain,
 Either some one, like us, night-foundered here,
 Or else some neighbor woodman, or, at worst,
 Some roving robber calling to his fellows. 485

Sec. Bro. Heaven keep my sister! Again, again,
and near!

Best draw, and stand upon our guard.

Eld. Bro. I'll halloo.

If he be friendly, he comes well: if not,
Defense is a good cause, and Heaven be for us! 489

The ATTENDANT SPIRIT, habited like a shepherd

That halloo I should know. What are you? Speak.
Come not too near; you fall on iron stakes else.

Spir. What voice is that? my young Lord? speak
again.

Sec. Bro. O brother, 'tis my father's Shepherd, sure.

Eld. Bro. Thyrsis! whose artful strains have oft
delayed

The huddling brook to hear his madrigal, 495
And sweetened every musk-rose of the dale.

How camest thou here, good swain? Hath any ram
Slipped from the fold, or young kid lost his dam,
Or straggling wether the pent flock forsook?

How couldst thou find this dark sequestered nook? 500

Spir. O my loved master's heir, and his next joy,
I came not here on such a trivial toy
As a strayed ewe, or to pursue the stealth
Of pilfering wolf; not all the fleecy wealth
That doth enrich these downs is worth a thought 505
To this my errand, and the care it brought.
But, oh! my virgin Lady, where is she?
How chance she is not in your company?

Eld. Bro. To tell thee sadly, Shepherd, without
blame

Or our neglect, we lost her as we came. 510

Spir. Aye me unhappy! then my fears are true.

Eld. Bro. What fears, good Thyrsis? Prithee
briefly shew.

Spir. I'll tell ye. 'Tis not vain or fabulous
(Though so esteemed by shallow ignorance)

What the sage poets, taught by the heavenly Muse, 515
Storied of old in high immortal verse

Of dire Chimeras and enchanted isles,

And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to Hell;

For such there be, but unbelief is blind.

Within the navel of this hideous wood, 520

Immured in cypress shades, a sorcerer dwells,

Of Bacchus and of Circe born, great Comus,

Deep skilled in all his mother's witcheries,

And here to every thirsty wanderer

By sly enticement gives his baneful cup, 525

With many murmurs mixed, whose pleasing poison

The visage quite transforms of him that drinks,

And the inglorious likeness of a beast

Fixes instead, unmolding reason's mintage

Charactered in the face. This have I learnt 530

Tending my flocks hard by i' the hilly crofts

That brow this bottom glade; whence night by night

He and his monstrous rout are heard to howl

Like stabled wolves, or tigers at their prey,

Doing abhorred rites to Hecate 535

In their obscurèd haunts of inmost bowers.

Yet have they many baits and guileful spells
To inveigle and invite the unwary sense
Of them that pass unweeting by the way.
This evening late, by then the chewing flocks 540
Had ta'en their supper on the savory herb
Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,
I sat me down to watch upon a bank
With ivy canopied, and interwove
With flaunting honeysuckle, and began, 545
Wrapt in a pleasing fit of melancholy,
To meditate my rural minstrelsy,
Till fancy had her fill. But ere a close
The wonted roar was up amidst the woods,
And filled the air with barbarous dissonance; 550
At which I ceased, and listened them awhile,
Till an unusual stop of sudden silence
Gave respite to the drowsy-flighted steeds
That draw the litter of close-curtained Sleep.
At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound 555
Rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes,
And stole upon the air, that even Silence
Was took ere she was ware, and wished she might
Deny her nature, and be never more,
Still to be so displaced. I was all ear, 560
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of Death. But, oh! ere long
Too well I did perceive it was the voice
Of my most honored Lady, your dear sister.
Amazed I stood, harrowed with grief and fear; 565
And "O poor hapless nightingale," thought I,

"How sweet thou sing'st, how near the deadly snare!"
 Then down the lawns I ran with headlong haste,
 Through paths and turnings often trod by day,
 Till, guided by mine ear, I found the place 570
 Where that damned wizzard, hid in sly disguise
 (For so by certain signs I knew), had met
 Already, ere my best speed could prevent,
 The aidless innocent lady, his wished prey;
 Who gently asked if he had seen such two, 575
 Supposing him some neighbor villager.
 Longer I durst not stay, but soon I guessed
 Ye were the two she meant; with that I sprung
 Into swift flight, till I had found you here;
 But further know I not.

Sec. Bro. O night and shades, 580
 How are ye joined with hell in triple knot
 Against the unarmed weakness of one virgin,
 Alone and helpless! Is this the confidence
 You gave me, brother?

Eld. Bro. Yes, and keep it still;
 Lean on it safely; not a period 585
 Shall be unsaid for me. Against the threats
 Of malice or of sorcery, or that power
 Which erring men call Chance, this I hold firm:
 Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt,
 Surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled; 590
 Yea, even that which Mischief meant most harm
 Shall in the happy trial prove most glory.
 But evil on itself shall back recoil,
 And mix no more with goodness, when at last,

Gathered like scum, and settled to itself, 595
It shall be in eternal restless change
Self-fed and self-consumed. If this fail,
The pillared firmament is rottenness,
And earth's base built on stubble. But come, let's on!
Against the opposing will and arm of Heaven 600
May never this just sword be lifted up;
But, for that damned magician, let him be girt
With all the grisly legions that troop
Under the sooty flag of Acheron,
Harpies and Hydras, or all the monstrous forms 605
'Twixt Africa and Ind, I'll find him out,
And force him to return his purchase back,
Or drag him by the curls to a foul death,
Cursed as his life.

Spir. Alas! good venturous youth,
I love thy courage yet, and bold emprise; 610
But here thy sword can do thee little stead.
Far other arms and other weapons must
Be those that quell the might of hellish charms.
He with his bare wand can unthread thy joints,
And crumble all thy sinews.

Eld. Bro. Why, prithee, Shepherd, 615
How durst thou then thyself approach so near
As to make this relation?

Spir. Care and utmost shifts
How to secure the Lady from surprisal
Brought to my mind a certain shepherd lad,
Of small regard to see to, yet well skilled 620
In every virtuous plant and healing herb

That spreads her verdant leaf to the morning ray.
He loved me well, and oft would beg me sing;
Which when I did, he on the tender grass
Would sit, and hearken even to ecstasy, 625
And in requital ope his leathern scrip,
And show me simples of a thousand names,
Telling their strange and vigorous faculties.
Amongst the rest a small unsightly root,
But of divine effect, he culled me out. 630
The leaf was darkish, and had prickles on it,
But in another country, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flower, but not in this soil:
Unknown, and like esteemed, and the dull swain
Treads on it daily with his clouted shoon; 635
And yet more med'cinal is it than that Moly
That Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave.
He called it Hæmony, and gave it me,
And bade me keep it as of sovran use
'Gainst all enchantments, mildew blast, or damp, 640
Or ghastly Furies' apparition.
I pursed it up, but little reckoning made,
Till now that this extremity compelled.
But now I find it true; for by this means
I knew the foul enchanter, though disguised, 645
Entered the very lime-twigs of his spells,
And yet came off. If you have this about you
(As I will give you when we go) you may
Boldly assault the necromancer's hall;
Where if he be, with dauntless hardihood 650
And brandished blade rush on him: break his glass,

And shed the luscious liquor on the ground ;
 But seize his wand. Though he and his curst crew
 Fierce sign of battle make, and menace high,
 Or, like the sons of Vulcan, vomit smoke, 655
 Yet will they soon retire, if he but shrink.

Eld. Bro. Thyrsis, lead on apace ; I'll follow thee ;
 And some good angel bear a shield before us !

*The Scene changes to a stately palace, set out with all manner
 of deliciousness: soft music, tables spread with all dainties.
 COMUS appears with his rabble, and THE LADY set in an
 enchanted Chair: to whom he offers his glass; which she
 puts by, and goes about to rise*

Comus. Nay, Lady, sit. If I but wave this wand,
 Your nerves are all chained up in alabaster, 660
 And you a statue, or as Daphne was,
 Root-bound, that fled Apollo.

Lady. Fool, do not boast.
 Thou canst not touch the freedom of my mind
 With all thy charms, although this corporal rind
 Thou hast immanacled while Heaven sees good. 665

Comus. Why are you vexed, Lady? why do you
 frown?
 Here dwell no frowns, nor anger ; from these gates
 Sorrow flies far. See, here be all the pleasures
 That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts,
 When the fresh blood grows lively, and returns 670
 Brisk as the April buds in primrose season.
 And first behold this cordial julep here,
 That flames and dances in his crystal bounds,

With spirits of balm and fragrant syrups mixed.
 Not that Nepenthes which the wife of Thone 675
 In Egypt gave to Jove-born Helena
 Is of such power to stir up joy as this,
 To life so friendly, or so cool to thirst.
 Why should you be so cruel to yourself,
 And to those dainty limbs, which Nature lent 680
 For gentle usage and soft delicacy?
 But you invert the covenants of her trust,
 And harshly deal, like an ill borrower,
 With that which you received on other terms,
 Scorning the unexempt condition 685
 By which all mortal frailty must subsist,
 Refreshment after toil, ease after pain,
 That have been tired all day without repast,
 And timely rest have wanted. But, fair virgin,
 This will restore all soon.

Lady. 'Twill not, false traitor! 690
 'Twill not restore the truth and honesty
 That thou hast banished from thy tongue with lies.
 Was this the cottage and the safe abode
 Thou told'st me of? What grim aspects are these,
 These ugly-headed monsters? Mercy guard me! 695
 Hence with thy brewed enchantments, foul deceiver!
 Hast thou betrayed my credulous innocence
 With visored falsehood and base forgery?
 And wouldst thou seek again to trap me here
 With liquorish baits, fit to ensnare a brute? 700
 Were it a draught for Juno when she banquets,
 I would not taste thy treasonous offer. None

But such as are good men can give good things;
And that which is not good is not delicious
To a well-governed and wise appetite. 705

Comus. O foolishness of men! that lend their ears
To those budge doctors of the Stoic fur,
And fetch their precepts from the Cynic tub,
Praising the lean and sallow Abstinence!
Wherefore did Nature pour her bounties forth 710
With such a full and unwithdrawing hand,
Covering the earth with odors, fruits, and flocks,
Thronging the seas with spawn innumerable,
But all to please and sate the curious taste?
And set to work millions of spinning worms, 715
That in their green shops weave the smooth-haired silk,
To deck her sons; and, that no corner might
Be vacant of her plenty, in her own loins
She hatched the all-worshiped ore and precious gems,
To store her children with. If all the world 720
Should, in a pet of temperance, feed on pulse,
Drink the clear stream, and nothing wear but frieze,
The All-giver would be unthanked, would be unpraised,
Not half his riches known, and yet despised;
And we should serve him as a grudging master, 725
As a penurious niggard of his wealth,
And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,
Who would be quite surcharged with her own weight,
And strangled with her waste fertility:
The earth cumbered, and the winged air darked with
plumes, 730
The herds would over-multitude their lords;

The sea o'erfraught would swell, and the unsought
diamonds

Would so emblaze the forehead of the deep,
And so bestud with stars, that they below
Would grow inured to light, and come at last 735
To gaze upon the sun with shameless brows.

List, Lady; be not coy, and be not cozened
With that same vaunted name, Virginity.
Beauty is Nature's coin; must not be hoarded,
But must be current; and the good thereof 740

Consists in mutual and partaken bliss,
Unsavory in the enjoyment of itself.
If you let slip time, like a neglected rose
It withers on the stalk with languished head.

Beauty is Nature's brag, and must be shown 745
In courts, at feasts, and high solemnities,
Where most may wonder at the workmanship.
It is for homely features to keep home;

They had their name thence: coarse complexions
And cheeks of sorry grain will serve to ply 750
The sampler, and to tease the huswife's wool.

What need a vermeil-tinctured lip for that,
Love-darting eyes, or tresses like the morn?
There was another meaning in these gifts;
Think what, and be advised; you are but young yet. 755

Lady. I had not thought to have unlocked my lips
In this unhallowed air, but that this juggler
Would think to charm my judgment, as mine eyes,
Obtruding false rules pranked in reason's garb.
I hate when vice can bolt her arguments 760

And virtue has no tongue to check her pride.
Impostor! do not charge most innocent Nature,
As if she would her children should be riotous
With her abundance. She, good cateress,
Means her provision only to the good, 765
That live according to her sober laws,
And holy dictate of spare Temperance.
If every just man that now pines with want
Had but a moderate and beseeeming share
Of that which lewdly-pampered Luxury 770
Now heaps upon some few with vast excess,
Nature's full blessings would be well-dispensed
In unsuperfluous even proportion,
And she no whit encumbered with her store;
And then the Giver would be better thanked, 775
His praise due paid: for swinish gluttony
Ne'er looks to Heaven amidst his gorgeous feast,
But with besotted base ingratitude
Craves, and blasphemes his Feeder. Shall I go on?
Or have I said enow? To him that dares 780
Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words
Against the sun-clad power of chastity
Fain would I something say;—yet to what end?
Thou hast nor ear, nor soul, to apprehend
The sublime notion and high mystery 785
That must be uttered to unfold the sage
And serious doctrine of Virginity;
And thou art worthy that thou shouldst not know
More happiness than this thy present lot.
Enjoy your dear wit, and gay rhetoric, 790

That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence;
 Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinced.
 Yet, should I try, the uncontrollèd worth
 Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits
 To such a flame of sacred vehemence 795
 That dumb things would be moved to sympathize,
 And the brute Earth would lend her nerves, and shake.
 Till all thy magic structures, reared so high,
 Were shattered into heaps o'er thy false head.

Comus. She fables not. I feel that I do fear 800
 Her words set off by some superior power;
 And, though not mortal, yet a cold shuddering dew
 Dips me all o'er, as when the wrath of Jove
 Speaks thunder and the chains of Erebus
 To some of Saturn's crew. I must dissemble, 805
 And try her yet more strongly.—Come, no more!
 This is mere moral babble, and direct
 Against the canon laws of our foundation.
 I must not suffer this; yet 'tis but the lees
 And settlings of a melancholy blood. 810
 But this will cure all straight; one sip of this
 Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight
 Beyond the bliss of dreams. Be wise, and taste . . .

The BROTHERS *rush in with swords drawn, wrest his glass out
 of his hand, and break it against the ground: his rout
 make sign of resistance, but are all driven in. The
 ATTENDANT SPIRIT comes in*

Spir. What! have you let the false enchanter scape?
 O, ye mistook; ye should have snatched his wand, 815

And bound him fast. Without his rod reversed,
And backward mutters of dissevering power,
We cannot free the Lady that sits here
In stony fetters fixed and motionless.
Yet stay: be not disturbed; now I bethink me, 820
Some other means I have which may be used,
Which once of Melibœus old I learnt,
The soothest shepherd that e'er piped on plains.

There is a gentle Nymph not far from hence,
That with moist curb sways the smooth Severn
stream: 825

Sabrina is her name: a virgin pure;
Whilom she was the daughter of Locrine,
That had the scepter from his father Brute.
She, guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit
Of her enragèd stepdame, Guendolen, 830
Commended her fair innocence to the flood
That stayed her flight with his cross-flowing course.
The water-nymphs, that in the bottom played,
Held up their pearled wrists, and took her in,
Bearing her straight to aged Nereus' hall; 835
Who, piteous of her woes, reared her lank head,
And gave her to his daughters to imbathe
In nectared lavers strewed with asphodel,
And through the porch and inlet of each sense
Dropt in ambrosial oils, till she revived, 840
And underwent a quick immortal change,
Made Goddess of the river. Still she retains
Her maiden gentleness, and oft at eve
Visits the herds along the twilight meadows,

Helping all urchin blasts, and ill-luck signs 845
 That the shrewd meddling elf delights to make,
 Which she with precious vial'd liquors heals:
 For which the shepherds, at their festivals,
 Carol her goodness loud in rustic lays,
 And throw sweet garland wreaths into her stream 850
 Of pansies, pinks, and gaudy daffodils.
 And, as the old swain said, she can unlock
 The clasping charm, and thaw the numbing spell,
 If she be right invoked in warbled song;
 For maidenhood she loves, and will be swift 855
 To aid a virgin, such as was herself,
 In hard-besetting need. This will I try,
 And add the power of some adjuring verse.

Song

Sabrina fair,
 Listen where thou art sitting 860
 Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
 In twisted braids of lilies knitting
 The loose train of thy amber-dropping hair;
 Listen for dear honor's sake,
 Goddess of the silver lake, 865
 Listen and save!

Listen, and appear to us,
 In name of great Oceanus,
 By the earth-shaking Neptune's mace,
 And Tethys' grave majestic pace; 870
 By hoary Nereus' wrinkled look,

And the Carpathian wizard's hook;
 By scaly Triton's winding shell,
 And old soothsaying Glaucus' spell;
 By Leucothea's lovely hands, 875
 And her son that rules the strands;
 By Thetis' tinsel-slippered feet,
 And the songs of Sirens sweet;
 By dead Parthenope's dear tomb,
 And fair Ligea's golden comb, 880
 Wherewith she sits on diamond rocks
 Sleeking her soft alluring locks;
 By all the nymphs that nightly dance
 Upon thy streams with wily glance;
 Rise, rise, and heave thy rosy head
 From thy coral-paven bed, 885
 And bridle in thy headlong wave,
 Till thou our summons answered have.
 Listen and save!

SABRINA rises, attended by Water-nymphs, and sings

By the rushy-fringed bank, 890
 Where grows the willow and the osier dank,
 My sliding chariot stays,
 Thick set with agate, and the azurn sheen
 Of turkis blue, and emerald green,
 That in the channel strays: 895
 Whilst from off the waters fleet
 Thus I set my printless feet
 O'er the cowslip's velvet head,

That bends not as I tread.
 Gentle swain, at thy request 900
 I am here!

Spir. Goddess dear,
 We implore thy powerful hand
 To undo the charmèd band
 Of true virgin here distressed 905
 Through the force and through the wile
 Of unblessed enchanter vile.

Sabr. Shepherd, 'tis my office best
 To help ensnarèd chastity.
 Brightest Lady, look on me. 910
 Thus I sprinkle on thy breast
 Drops that from my fountain pure
 I have kept of precious cure;
 Thrice upon thy finger's tip,
 Thrice upon thy rubied lip: 915
 Next this marble venomèd seat,
 Smeared with gums of glutinous heat,
 I touch with chaste palms moist and cold.
 Now the spell hath lost his hold;
 And I must haste ere morning hour 920
 To wait in Amphitrite's bower.

SABRINA descends, and THE LADY rises out of her seat

Spir. Virgin, daughter of Loctrine,
 Sprung of old Anchises' line,
 May thy brimmèd waves for this
 Their full tribute never miss 925

From a thousand petty rills,
That tumble down the snowy hills:
Summer drought or singèd air
Never scorch thy tresses fair,
Nor wet October's torrent flood 930
Thy molten crystal fill with mud;
May thy billows roll ashore
The beryl and the golden ore;
May thy lofty head be crowned
With many a tower and terrace round, 935
And here and there thy banks upon
With groves of myrrh and cinnamon.

Come, Lady; while Heaven lends us grace,
Let us fly this cursed place,
Lest the sorcerer us entice 940
With some other new device.
Not a waste or needless sound
Till we come to holier ground.
I shall be your faithful guide
Through this gloomy covert wide; 945
And not many furlongs thence
Is your Father's residence,
Where this night are met in state
Many a friend to gratulate
His wished presence, and beside 950
All the swains that there abide
With jigs and rural dance resort.
We shall catch them at their sport,
And our sudden coming there
Will double all their mirth and cheer. 955

Come, let us haste; the stars grow high,
But Night sits monarch yet in the mid sky.

The Scene changes, presenting Ludlow Town, and the President's Castle: then come in Country Dancers; after them the ATTENDANT SPIRIT, with the two BROTHERS and THE LADY

Song

Spir. Back, shepherds, back! Enough your play
Till next sunshine holiday.
Here be, without duck or nod, 960
Other trippings to be trod
Of lighter toes, and such court guise
As Mercury did first devise
With the mincing Dryades
On the lawns and on the leas. 965

This second Song presents them to their Father and Mother

Noble Lord and Lady bright,
I have brought ye new delight.
Here behold so goodly grown
Three fair branches of your own.
Heaven hath timely tried their youth, 970
Their faith, their patience, and their truth,
And sent them here through hard assays
With a crown of deathless praise,
To triumph in victorious dance
O'er sensual folly and intemperance. 975

The dances ended, the SPIRIT epiloguizes

Spir. To the ocean now I fly,
And those happy climes that lie
Where day never shuts his eye,
Up in the broad fields of the sky.
There I suck the liquid air, 980
All amidst the gardens fair
Of Hesperus, and his daughters three
That sing about the golden tree.
Along the crispèd shades and bowers
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring; 985
The Graces and the rosy-bosomed Hours
Thither all their bounties bring.
There eternal Summer dwells,
And west winds with musky wing
About the cedarn alleys fling 990
Nard and cassia's balmy smells.
Iris there with humid bow
Waters the odorous banks, that blow
Flowers of more mingled hue
Than her purpled scarf can shew, 995
And drenches with Elysian dew
(List, mortals, if your ears be true)
Beds of hyacinth and roses,
Where young Adonis oft reposes,
Waxing well of his deep wound, 1000
In slumber soft, and on the ground
Sadly sits the Assyrian queen.
But far above, in spangled sheen,
Celestial Cupid, her famed son, advanced,
Holds his dear Psyche, sweet entranced 1005

After her wandering labors long,
 Till free consent the gods among
 Make her his eternal bride,
 And from her fair unspotted side
 Two blissful twins are to be born, 1010
 Youth and Joy; so Jove hath sworn.

But now my task is smoothly done;
 I can fly, or I can run
 Quickly to the green earth's end,
 Where the bowed welkin slow doth bend, 1015
 And from thence can soar as soon
 To the corners of the moon.
 Mortals, that would follow me,
 Love Virtue; she alone is free.
 She can teach ye how to climb 1020
 Higher than the sphery chime;
 Or, if Virtue feeble were,
 Heaven itself would stoop to her.

LYCIDAS

In this Monody the Author bewails a learned Friend, unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester on the Irish Seas, 1637; and, by occasion, foretells the ruin of our corrupted Clergy, then in their height.

YET once more, O ye laurels, and once more,
 Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,

I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forced fingers rude
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year. 5
Bitter constraint and sad occasion dear
Compels me to disturb your season due;
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.
Who would not sing for Lycidas? he knew 10
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.
He must not float upon his watery bier
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
Without the meed of some melodious tear.

Begin, then, Sisters of the sacred well 15
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring;
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.
Hence with denial vain and coy excuse:
So may some gentle Muse
With lucky words favor *my* destined urn, 20
And as he passes turn,
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud!

For we were nursed upon the selfsame hill,
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill;
Together both, ere the high lawns appeared 25
Under the opening eyelids of the Morn,
We drove afield, and both together heard
What time the grayfly winds her sultry horn,
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
Oft till the star that rose at evening bright 30
Toward heaven's descent had sloped his westering wheel.
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,

Tempered to the oaten flute;
Rough Satyrs danced, and Fauns with cloven heel
From the glad sound would not be absent long; 35
And old Damœtas loved to hear our song.

But, oh! the heavy change, now thou art gone,
Now thou art gone and never must return!
Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods and desert caves,
With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown, 40
And all their echoes, mourn.

The willows, and the hazel copses green,
Shall now no more be seen
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
As killing as the canker to the rose, 45
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,
Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear,
When first the whitethorn blows;
Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.

Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless
deep 50

Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas?
For neither were ye playing on the steep
Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream. 55
Aye me! I fondly dream

"Had ye been there," . . . for what could that have
done?

What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son,
Whom universal nature did lament, 60

When, by the rout that made the hideous roar,
His gory visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?

Alas! what boots it with uncessant care
To tend the homely, slighted, shepherd's trade, 65
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?

Were it not better done, as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?

Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise 70
(That last infirmity of noble mind)

To scorn delights and live laborious days;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred shears,
And slits the thin-spun life. "But not the praise,"

Phœbus replied, and touched my trembling ears:

"Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistering foil
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumor lies, 80
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed."

O fountain Arethuse, and thou honored flood, 85
Smooth-sliding Mincius, crowned with vocal reeds,
That strain I heard was of a higher mood.

But now my oat proceeds,
And listens to the Herald of the Sea,
That came in Neptune's plea. 90

He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds,
What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain?
And questioned every gust of rugged wings
That blows from off each beakèd promontory.
They knew not of his story; 95
And sage Hippotades their answer brings,
That not a blast was from his dungeon strayed:
The air was calm, and on the level brine
Sleek Panope with all her sisters played.
It was that fatal and perfidious bark, 100
Built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.
Next, Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge 105
Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.
“Ah! who hath reft,” quoth he, “my dearest pledge?”
Last came, and last did go,
The Pilot of the Galilean Lake;
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain 110
(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain).
He shook his mitered locks, and stern bespake:—
“How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,
Enow of such as, for their bellies’ sake,
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold! 115
Of other care they little reckoning make
Than how to scramble at the shearers’ feast,
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to
hold

A sheep-hook, or have learnt aught else the least 120
That to the faithful herdman's art belongs!
What reck's it them? What need they? They are sped;
And, when they list, their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw;
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed, 125
But, swoln with wind and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw
Daily devours apace, and nothing said.
But that two-handed engine at the door 130
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."
Return, Alpheus; the dread voice is past
That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian Muse,
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast
Their bells and flowerets of a thousand hues. 135
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,
Throw hither all your quaint enameled eyes,
That on the green turf suck the honeyed showers, 140
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet,
The glowing violet, 145
The musk-rose, and the well-attired woodbine,
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears;
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,

And daffadillies fill their cups with tears, 150
To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.
For so, to interpose a little ease,
Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise.
Aye me! whilst thee the shores and sounding seas
Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled; 155
Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,
Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide
Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world;
Or whether thou, to our moist vows denied,
Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old, 160
Where the great Vision of the guarded mount
Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold.
Look homeward, Angel, now, and melt with ruth:
And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.
Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more. 165
For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead,
Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor.
So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,
And yet anon repairs his drooping head,
And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled ore 170
Flames in the forehead of the morning sky;
So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,
Through the dear might of Him that walked the waves,
Where, other groves and other streams along,
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves, 175
And hears the unexpressive nuptial song
In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.
There entertain him all the saints above,
In solemn troops and sweet societies,

That sing, and singing in their glory move, 180
 And wipe the tears forever from his eyes.
 Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more;
 Henceforth thou art the Genius of the shore,
 In thy large recompense, and shalt be good
 To all that wander in that perilous flood. 185

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills,
 While the still morn went out with sandals gray;
 He touched the tender stops of various quills,
 With eager thought warbling his Doric lay;
 And now the sun had stretched out all the hills, 190
 And now was dropt into the western bay.
 At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue;
 To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.

AN EPITAPH ON THE ADMIRABLE DRAMATIC POET,
 W. SHAKSPERE

WHAT needs my Shakspeare for his honored bones
 The labor of an age in pilèd stones?
 Or that his hallowed reliques should be hid
 Under a star-ypointing pyramid?
 Dear son of memory, great heir of fame, 5
 What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
 Thou in our wonder and astonishment
 Hast built thyself a livelong monument.
 For whilst to the shame of slow-endeavoring art
 Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart 10
 Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book
 Those Delphic lines with deep impression took,

Then thou, our fancy of itself bereaving,
 Dost make us marble with too much conceiving;
 And so sepulchered in such pomp dost lie 15
 That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.

SONNETS

TO THE NIGHTINGALE

O NIGHTINGALE that on yon bloomy spray
 Warbl'st at eve, when all the woods are still,
 Thou with fresh hope the lover's heart dost fill,
 While the jolly hours lead on propitious May.
 Thy liquid notes that close the eye of day, 5
 First heard before the shallow cuckoo's bill,
 Portend success in love. O, if Jove's will
 Have linked that amorous power to thy soft lay,
 Now timely sing, ere the rude bird of hate
 Foretell my hopeless doom, in some grove nigh; 10
 As thou from year to year hast sung too late
 For my relief, yet hadst no reason why.
 Whether the Muse or Love call thee his mate,
 Both them I serve, and of their train am I.

ON HIS HAVING ARRIVED AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-
THREE

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
 Stolen on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!
 My hasting days fly on with full career,

But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth 5
That I to manhood am arrived so near;
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits endu'th.
Yet, be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even 10
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven.
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Taskmaster's eye.

TO MR. H. LAWES, ON HIS AIRS

HARRY, whose tuneful and well-measured song
First taught our English music how to span
Words with just note and accent, not to scan
With Midas' ears, committing short and long,
Thy worth and skill exempts thee from the throng, 5
With praise enough for Envy to look wan;
To after age thou shalt be writ the man
That with smooth air couldst humor best our tongue.
Thou honor'st Verse, and Verse must lend her wing
To honor thee, the priest of Phœbus' quire, 10
That tunest their happiest lines in hymn or story.
Dante shall give Fame leave to set thee higher
Than his Casella, whom he wooed to sing,
Met in the milder shades of Purgatory.

ON THE LORD GENERAL FAIRFAX, AT THE SIEGE
OF COLCHESTER

FAIRFAX, whose name in arms through Europe rings,
 Filling each mouth with envy or with praise,
 And all her jealous monarchs with amaze,
 And rumors loud that daunt remotest kings,
 Thy firm unshaken virtue ever brings 5
 Victory home, though new rebellions raise
 Their Hydra heads, and the false North displays
 Her broken league to imp their serpent wings.
 O yet a nobler task awaits thy hand
 (For what can war but endless war still breed?) 10
 Till truth and right from violence be freed;
 And public faith cleared from the shameful brand
 Of public fraud. In vain doth Valor bleed,
 While Avarice and Rapine share the land.

TO THE LORD GENERAL CROMWELL, MAY, 1652
 ON THE PROPOSALS OF CERTAIN MINISTERS AT THE COMMITTEE
 FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL

CROMWELL, our chief of men, who through a cloud
 Not of war only, but detractions rude,
 Guided by faith and matchless fortitude,
 To peace and truth thy glorious way hast plowed,
 And on the neck of crownèd Fortune proud 5
 Hast reared God's trophies, and his work pursued,
 While Darwen stream, with blood of Scots imbrued,
 And Dunbar field, resounds thy praises loud,

And Worcester's laureate wreath: yet much remains
To conquer still; Peace hath her victories 10
No less renowned than War: new foes arise,
Threatening to bind our souls with secular chains.
Help us to save free conscience from the paw
Of hireling wolves, whose Gospel is their maw.

ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN PIEDMONT

AVENGE, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshiped stocks and stones, 5
Forget not: in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piemontese, that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow 10
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple Tyrant; that from these may grow
A hundredfold, who having learnt the way
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

ON HIS BLINDNESS

WHEN I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present 5

My true account, lest He returning chide;
"Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?"
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts. Who best 10
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

NOTES

ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY

5. **Holy sages:** The Prophets. See *Paradise Lost*, xii, 324.

6. **Deadly forfeit:** The penalty of death, incurred through Adam's fall.

10. **Wont:** Was wont, used. *Wont* is the preterit of the old verb *won*, Anglo-Saxon, *wunian*, to dwell, thence to do habitually.

14. **Darksome house:** Compare *Il Penseroso*, 90-91.

15. **Heavenly Muse:** Milton begins *Paradise Lost* with an invocation to the "Heavenly Muse."

23. **Wizards:** Wise men; the original meaning of the word. Cf. Spenser's "Strong advizement of six wisards old" (*Faerie Queene*, i, 4, 12).

24. **Prevent:** Anticipate, forestall; Latin *præ-venire*, to come before.

27. **Angel quire:** See *Luke*, ii, 13-14; and *Paradise Regained*, i, 242.

28. **Secret altar, etc.:** See *Isaiah*, vi, 6.

39. **Guilty front:** According to mediæval theology, nature was involved in Adam's fall, and hence she hides her *guilty face*. In making the snow *innocent*, the poet is probably as consistent as the theologians.

41. **Pollute:** A contracted form of the participle, often used by Milton, as *situate* for situated, *devote*, and *increate*.

45. **To cease:** To cause to cease, as in *Cymbeline*, v, 5, 255:

"A certain stuff, which being ta'en would cease
The present power of life."

48. **Turning sphere:** The nine revolving spheres of the Ptolemaic theory, here regarded as one system or universe. See note on l. 125, below.

50. **Turtle wing:** Wing of the turtle-dove.

52. **Strikes:** The metaphor is that of the enchanter with his magic wand. Note the symbols of peace in the stanza.

56. **Hooked chariot:** The ancient war-chariot, with scythes or hooks upon the wheels.

59. **Awful:** Full of awe, awestruck. Shakspeare has "the awless lion." (*King John*, i, 1.)

60. **Sovran:** Milton's usual form, which is nearer the original than *sovereign*; Italian, *sorrano*; Latin, *superanus*. See Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary*.

64. **Whist:** Hushed; the interjection *whist*, or *hist*, used as a participle. Cf. *The Tempest*, i, 2, 379:

"And kiss'd
The wild waves whist."

65. **Ocean:** Rhythmically, three syllables; so *union*, l. 108, and *session*, l. 163.

68. **Birds of calm:** Halcyons, or kingfishers. According to ancient belief, at the time of the winter solstice, when these birds were breeding, in a nest floating on the water, the sea was miraculously calm. The story of the transformation of Halcyone and her husband into kingfishers is told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, xi.

71. **Precious influence:** An astrological expression. "Whenever this word occurs in our poetry, down to comparatively a modern day, it refers to invisible illapses of power, skyey planetary effects, supposed to be exercised by the heavenly luminaries upon the lives of men" (Trench). See *L'Allegro*, 122, and note.

73. **For all:** Notwithstanding; as in *Macbeth*, iv, 2, 36: "My father is not dead for all your saying." So Burns's "for a' that."

74. **Lucifer:** The morning star (light-bearer). "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" (*Isaiah*, xiv, 12). From this passage *Lucifer* came to be identified with Satan. See *Paradise Lost*, x, 425.

76 **Bespake**: Spake. "In the few places in Milton where *bespake* occurs, it is emphatic, the prefix *be* giving a slightly intensive force" (Browne).

81. **As**: As if.

85. **Lawn**: Pasture; originally, an open space in a forest. See the description of the groves of Paradise, *Paradise Lost*, iv, 252:

"Betwixt them lawns, or level downs, and flocks
Grazing the tender herb, were interposed."

86. **Or ere**: Before. *Or*, meaning *before* (Anglo-Saxon *aer*, *ere*), is common in early English, as in Chaucer. Cf. *Hamlet*, i, 2, 147. "It is probable that *or ere* arose as a reduplicated expression, in which *ere* repeats and explains *or*" (Skeat).

88. **Than**: Milton takes advantage of the old form of *then*, not entirely obsolete in his time, for the sake of the rhyme.

89. **Mighty Pan**: In mythology, Pan was originally the god of hills, woods, flocks, and shepherds; later he was regarded as the symbol of all nature or the universe. Spenser, in the *Shepherd's Calendar* (May), has: "When great Pan account of shepherdes shall aske," and the *Glosse* explains this: "Great Pan is Christ, the very God of all shepheards, which calleth himselfe the greate and good shepherd. The name is most rightly (methinkes) applyed to him; for Pan signifieth all, or omnipotent, which is onely the Lord Jesus."

92. **Silly**: Simple; Anglo-Saxon *saelig*, happy, deteriorating to *innocent*, then to *foolish*. Cf. 3 *Henry VI*, ii, 5, 43: "Shepherds looking on their silly sheep."

95. **Strook**: Apparently Milton's "favorite form of the past tense and participle of the verb *strike*" (Masson).

97. **Noise**: Music. So Spenser has "an heavenly noise" (*Faerie Queene*, i, 12, 39). Cf. *At a Solemn Music*, l. 18, "that melodious noise."

98. **As all**, etc.: *Such* must be understood from l. 93 before *Divinely-warbled*.

100. **Close**: The cadence or conclusion of a strain of music.

101. Nature, hearing such sound thrilling the airy region beneath the vaulted dome of the moon's dwelling place, i.e., the heavens, was now, etc. *Cynthia* is from Mt. Cynthus in Delos, the birthplace of Diana, or Artemis, goddess of the moon.

106. **Its**: One of the three places where Milton uses this word in his poetry. The others are *Paradise Lost*, i, 254, and iv, 813. Shakspeare used the word only ten times, and in the Authorized Version of the Bible (1611) *its* does not occur at all. This shows with what suspicion the word was regarded during this period of struggle for recognition.

112, 113. **Helmed cherubim**: The meaning of the epithets here is not clear. It was the cherubim that guarded the gates of Eden "with a flaming sword" (*Genesis*, iii, 24). "He may mean that the *cherubim* were the more purely defensive spirits, the *seraphim* more active" (Hales).

116. **Unexpressive**: Inexpressible. So in *Lycidas*, 176. Cf. *As You Like It*, iii, 2, 10: "The fair, the chaste, and unexpressive she."

117-124. This stanza is a poetic rendering of *Job*, xxxviii. 4-11.

125. Although the Copernican theory of the universe was known to Milton, he adopted for poetic purposes the Ptolemaic theory, according to which the earth is the center of our universe, and is inclosed within nine concentric crystalline spheres, a sphere for each of the five planets known to the ancients, one each for the sun, moon, and stars, and the *primum mobile*, which gives motion to the others. With Pythagoras arose the theory that the movement of these spheres produces an incomparable harmony, the "music of the spheres," so much admired, in imagination, by ancient poets and philosophers. Cf. *Arcades*, 63-67.

127. **If ye have power**, etc.: It was a part of the ancient belief about this celestial music that human ears are too gross to perceive it. See *Merchant of Venice*, v, 1, 60-65. In an early essay upon the subject, Milton maintained that men might hear this music, were their hearts and souls sufficiently pure.

132. **Consort:** Concert; literally, fellowship. Cf. *At a Solemn Music*, 27, where the word is used in the sense of *quire*. Cf. *Il Penseroso*, 145.

135. **Age of gold:** The golden age, or Saturnian age, when perfect peace and happiness prevailed. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, i, 89-112.

136. **Speckled:** Plague-spotted. Cf. Horace's "Maculosum nefas" (*Odes*, iv, 5, 22) and Shakspeare's "spotted and inconstant man" (*Midsummer Night's Dream*, i, 1, 110).

141, 142. An allusion to the story of Astræa (the star-maiden), the goddess of justice in the golden age, who at the end of that period was translated to the stars, and who, according to the ancient myth, was to return to earth with the return of the golden age. The application of the myth to the coming of the Messiah is one of the happiest uses of classic lore in the poem.

143. **Orbit in a rainbow, etc.:** In the first edition this line read:

"Th' enameld arras of the rainbow wearing."

146. **With radiant feet, etc.:** Like the descending angels in old pictures, with trailing clouds, bright or silvery in substance, as if made of some rich tissue.

154. Compare *John*, xvii, 22.

155. **Ychained:** The *y* is a corruption of the prefix *ge* of the past participle in Anglo-Saxon and modern German. So *yclept*, *L'Allegro*, 12.

157-159. See *Exodus*, xix, 16-19.

164. See 1 *Thessalonians*, iv, 16, 17.

168. **Old Dragon:** See *Revelations*, xx, 2; xii, 4 and 9.

169. **Straiter:** Narrower. Cf. *Matthew*, vii, 14: "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life."

172. **Swinges:** Lashes. In the original edition spelled *swindges*.

173. In stanzas XIX-XXVI the overthrow of the pagan religions by the coming of Christ is described. There was a tradition among the early Christians that this took place

suddenly at the birth of Christ. To make his description both vivid and comprehensive, Milton names some of the familiar deities of Greek, Roman, Syrian, and Egyptian mythologies. Rolfe cites the *Glosse* on Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* (May), in which the story from Plutarch's discourse *On the Ceasing of Oracles* is given, according to which certain mariners while sailing from Italy to Cyprus, at about the time of Christ's agony, heard a cry coming over the sea, "Great Pan is dead"; "wherewithall there was heard suche piteous outcryes, and dreadfull shrieking, as has not bene the like"; and "at that time, as he sayth, all Oracles surceased, and enchanted spirits, that were wont to delude the people, thenceforth held theyr peace." See De Quincey's essay on *The Pagan Oracles* and Mrs. Browning's poem, *The Dead Pan*.

178. **Steep of Delphos:** The most famous oracle of the Greeks was in the temple of Apollo at Delphi, or Delphos, among the steep cliffs of Mount Parnassus. In the innermost part of the temple (the *cell*, or *cella*), from a cleft in the rock arose a strange intoxicating vapor. Over this cleft was seated on a tripod the priestess, or Pythia, who in a trance induced by the rising vapor delivered the answers of the oracle.

The *hollow shriek* is a resounding, ghostlike shriek.

184. **A voice of weeping, etc.:** See *Isaiah*, lxxv, 19; *Jeremiah*, xxxi, 15.

185. **Poplar pale:** The white poplar.

186. **Parting genius:** Departing genius. So "parting day" in Gray's *Elegy*. The genii were guardian spirits of persons and localities.

188. **Nymphs:** The nymphs were inferior divinities of nature, dwelling in forests and beside springs and streams. The nymphs of rivers and springs are *Naiads*; the nymphs of the hills are *Oreads*, and those of the groves and forests are *Dryads*. Cf. *Il Penseroso*, 138.

191. **Lars and Lemures:** In Roman religion the *Lares* were household gods, the good spirits of ancestors, to whom daily prayers were offered. The *Lemures* were evil spirits, wandering

ghosts, that were expelled from the home by ceremonial rites performed yearly.

194. **Flamens**: Priests who attended the altars of particular gods. *Quaint* is peculiar, elaborate.

195. **The chill marble seems to sweat**: A prodigy frequently mentioned by ancient authors. Cf. Vergil's *Georgics*, i, 480. Thurber quotes from Cicero's *De Divinatione*: "It was reported to the senate that it had rained blood, that the river Atratus had even flowed with blood, and that the statues of the gods had sweat."

197. **Peor and Baälim**: Phœnician deities. *Baalim* is the plural of *Baal*, thus representing the deity in his various manifestations; as Jupiter was worshiped under various names among Greeks and Romans. Cf. *Numbers*, xxv, 18; xxxi, 16; *Joshua*, xxii, 17. The deities mentioned in this and the two following stanzas are described in *Paradise Lost*, i, 392-492.

199. **Twice-battered god of Palestine**: Dagon, the national god of the Philistines. See 1 *Samuel*, v, 3, 4.

200. **Mooned Ashtaroth**: The principal female deity of the Phœnicians, goddess of the moon. The form *Ashtaroth* is really the plural of *Ashtoreth*. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, i, 438; 1 *Kings*, xi, 33; *Judges*, x, 6. In Selden's *De Diis Syriis*, this goddess is called "regina cœli" and "mater deum," which seems to have suggested l. 201.

202. **Lybic Hammon**: The Lybian, and later the Egyptian, god Ammon, or Jupiter Ammon, represented with the horns of a ram. It was the oracle of this deity that Alexander consulted.

204. **Thammuz**: A Syrian god, who was killed by a wild boar, and yearly mourned by women. Cf. *Ezekiel*, viii, 14: "Then he brought me to the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north, and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz." Cf. *Paradise Lost*, i, 446. This myth was finally identified with that of Adonis, whose similar death was mourned by Aphrodite. See *Classical Dictionary*.

205. **Moloch**: See Milton's description, *Paradise Lost*, i,

392-396. Cf. 1 *Kings*, xi, 7; 2 *Kings*, xxiii, 10; *Jeremiah*, vii, 31. Browne quotes from Sandys's *Travels*, a popular book of Milton's time, the description of the valley of Tophet: "Therein the Hebrews sacrificed their children to Moloch, an idol of brass, having the head of a calf, the rest of a kingly figure with arms extended to receive the miserable sacrifice seared to death with his burning embracements. For the idol was hollow within, and filled with fire; and lest their lamentable shrieks should sad the heart of their parents, the priests of Moloch did deaf their ears with the continual clang of trumpets and timbrels."

212, 213. **Isis and Orus**, etc.: Orus, or Horus, was the Egyptian sun-god. Osiris was the Nile-god, and Isis, his wife, was goddess of the earth. Anubis, the son of Osiris, was represented with the head of a jackal, or dog-ape. Typhon, the brother of Osiris, contrived to shut him up in a chest, which he threw into the Nile. The ever-renewed incarnation of Osiris was in the form of the bull Apis.

215. **Unshowered**: Because there is little or no rain in Egypt.

214. **Memphian grove or green**: The fields about Memphis, in Egypt. At Memphis the sacred bull Apis was kept with ceremonious care.

220. **Sable-stoled**: Black-robed. The *stola* was the tunic, or robe, worn by a Roman lady. But *stole* was also used for scarf or veil, hence the ecclesiastical stole. Cf. *Il Penseroso*, 35.

223. **Eyn**: The old plural of eye, here used for the rhyme.

226. **Typhon**: The Greek name of Set or Suti, the brother and enemy of Osiris. He was sometimes worshiped in the form of a crocodile.

Not has the force of *not even*.

227, 228. Some editors suggest comparison with the feat of the infant Hercules, strangling serpents in his cradle.

231. **Orient**: Eastern. The *sun in bed* is the rising sun.

232-234. It was popular belief that ghosts trooped back to their confines at the crowing of the cock, or the first approach

of dawn. Cf. *Hamlet*, i, 1, 152, and *Midsummer Night's Dream*, iii, 2, 380:

“And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger,
At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,
Troop home to churchyards.”

234. **Fettered ghost:** They are bound underground, with the limited liberty of the night.

His several grave is his own, particular grave.

235. **Fays:** The Fays are fairy folk, “the pert faeries and the dapper elves” of *Comus*, 118.

236. **Night-steeds:** Cf. *Comus*, 553:

“The drowsy frightened steeds
That draw the litter of close-curtained sleep.”

Masson thinks the reference is to nightmares, or night-hags, and cites *Paradise Lost*, ii, 662.

236. **Their moon-loved maze:** Cf. Drake's *Culprit Fay*:

“Elf of eve, and starry fay!
Ye that love the moon's soft light.”

240. **Youngest-teemed:** Last born, i. e., the Star of Bethlehem.

241. **Hath fixed, etc.:** Has come to rest over the stable. “So, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them till it came and stood over where the young child was.”

243. **Courtly stable:** Because it is now the palace of the new king.

244. **Bright-harnessed:** With bright armor. *Harness* originally meant armor or implements of war. Cf. *Macbeth*, v, 5, 52; *Exodus*, xiii, 18.

L'ALLEGRO

1. **Melancholy:** The word here must be distinguished from the “divinest Melancholy” of *Il Penseroso*, l. 12. Here it is the “cold, dry, wretched, saturnine humor” of the old writers, which produces dejection, gloom, and madness. Milton makes

a poetic and playful use of the pseudo-scientific associations of the word, so extensively elaborated by Burton.

2. **Cerberus:** The three-headed dog, doorkeeper at the entrance to the infernal regions. Dante describes him (*Inferno*, vi) as "a beast cruel and monstrous, with three throats," and with "vermilion eyes, and a greasy and black beard, and a big belly, and hands armed with claws." The genealogy here is Milton's invention, the real husband of Night being Erebus; like the classic poets, he made free use of the myths to suit his own purpose, sometimes creating a new myth, as in ll. 18-24 below.

3. **Stygian cave:** An appropriate place for the birth of Melancholy, the poet thinks, is the den of Cerberus (Vergil's *Æneid*, vi, 418), on the bank of the river Styx, one of the four rivers of Hades, "Abhorred Styx, the flood of deadly hate" (*Paradise Lost*, ii, 577).

4. **Horrid:** Used in its original sense of *bristly*, hence *terrifying*; L. *horridus*. Note the imitative purpose in this verse.

5. **Uncouth:** Literally *unknown*, from the Anglo-Saxon *cunnan*, to know, "ken"; hence strange, wild, uncanny, forbidding.

6. **Jealous wings:** These words complete the metaphor beginning with "brooding." A brooding fowl is jealous of intruders.

7. **Night-raven:** Milton has been taken to task for making the raven a night bird, confusing it, perhaps, with the night-heron. But Shakspeare uses the same word (*Much Ado*, ii, 3, 84), and Milton was not more particular about his natural history. The raven is the bird of ill-omen, gloom, and despair (*Macbeth*, i, 5), and naturally only such a bird "sings" in the region of Melancholy's birthplace.

8. **Low-browed:** Overhanging, beetle-browed. *Ragged*, in the next line, is a common term with Shakspeare: "ragged prison walls" (*Richard II.*, v, 5); "Unto a ragged, fearful-hanging rock" (*Two Gentlemen of Verona*, i, 2, 21). Did Milton possibly have in mind the wild locks of the classical Furies, the Diræ, daughters of Night?

10. **Cimmerian:** The Cimmerians were a mythical people who, according to Homer (*Odyssey*, xi, 14) dwelt somewhere in the region of the Black Sea in perpetual darkness (hence, *Crimea*). Odysseus and his companions "reached earth's limits, the deep stream of the ocean, where the Cimmerian people's land and city lie, wrapt in a fog and cloud. Never on them does the shining sun look down with his beams, as he goes up the starry sky, but deadly night is spread abroad over these hapless men" (Palmer's version). See Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, xi, 592. Burton has "Cimmerian darkness" in the *Anatomy of Melancholy*.

11. The movement of the verse now suddenly and appropriately changes from the heavy, slow measures of the imprecation to the light, tripping measures of "heart-easing Mirth."

Fair and free is a somewhat stereotyped phrase of the old ballads, as in *Sir Eglamour*: "The erle's daughter fair and free."

12. **Yclept:** Called; past participle of the A.-S. verb *clipian*. The *y* is the decayed *ge*, the original prefix of the participle, as in German. So "ychained" in the *Hymn on the Nativity*. Hamlet says: "They clepe us drunkards" (*Hamlet*, i, 4).

Euphrosyne is Cheerfulness, one of the three Graces, who presided over the beauties and amenities, the charities of life, hence called by the Greeks *Charites*. The sister graces are *Thalia* (Bloom) and *Aglaia* (Brightness). See Horace's *Odes*, i, 4, 6. The graces, according to Hesiod, were the daughters of Zeus and Eurynome. The parentage given in the text is traced to the commentary of Servius on Vergil's *Æneid*, i, 720.

14. **At a birth:** The *a* in this expression is the old *an*, or *one*.

17. **As some sager sing:** These words playfully conceal the fact that the poet himself invents the following genealogy. His refined sense of fitness is intolerant of the coarser origin of the graces, as the offspring of Love and Wine, so he gives them the more beautiful and appropriate parentage of Zephyr,

the warm west wind of spring, and Aurora, goddess of the dawn.

20. **A-Maying:** The *a* here, as in *a-fishing*, *a-going*, *a-field*, etc., is the weakened form of the preposition *on*. The allusion is to the May-day sports and games, celebrated throughout English poetry. See Herrick's *Corinna's Going a-Maying*.

Once is the "once upon a time" of the story-tellers.

22. Cf. *Taming of the Shrew*, ii, 1, 174: "As morning roses newly washed with dew."

24. Cf. *Anatomy of Melancholy*, iii, 2, 3:

"That was so fine, so fair, so blithe, so debonair."

Also iii, 2, 5: "I am blithe and buxom, young and lusty, but I have never a suitor." Cf. also Shakspeare's *Pericles*, Prologue: "So buxom, blithe, and full of face."

Buxom originally meant *yielding*, *obedient* (A.-S. *bugan*, to bow); in this sense it occurs in *Paradise Lost*, ii, 842, and v, 270. Then it came to mean *lively*, *cheerful*, its meaning here. *Debonair* is the French *de bonne air*, of pleasant manners, gay and light-hearted. "A favorite word with the old romancers" (Masson).

27. **Quips and cranks:** Lyly, in *Alexander and Campaspe*, iii, 2, defines *quip* as "a short saying of a sharp wit, with a bitter sense in a sweet word." *Crank* is an odd turn or twist of speech, a humorous and more or less fantastic conceit.

28. Cf. *Anatomy of Melancholy*, iii, 2, 2:

"With becks and nods he first began
To try the wench's mind."

29. **Hebe:** The goddess of youth, and cup-bearer to the gods of Olympus.

33. **Come, and trip it:** Cf. *Tempest*, iv, 1, 45: "Each one tripping on his toe."

36. **Sweet Liberty:** The love of liberty is supposed to be specially characteristic of those dwelling among mountains. Cf. Wordsworth's sonnet, *Thought of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland*. Later this became an earnest theme with

Milton, and it will be noted that he here gives to the nymph the place of honor, "in thy right hand."

38. Crew: Compare the use of this word here with that of *Paradise Regained*, i, 107:

"his words impression left
Of much amazement to the infernal crew."

40. Unreproved: Unreprovable, innocent; like *unavoided*, unavoidable (*Richard III.*, iv, 4, 217); *unenchanting*, not to be enchanted.

41. This beautiful lark passage should be compared with the lark poems of other English poets, especially Shakspeare's song, "Hark, hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings" (*Cymbeline*, ii, 2), Shelley's *To a Skylark*, and Wordsworth's *To a Skylark*, "Ethereal minstrel! pilgrim of the sky!"

44. Cf. *Much Ado About Nothing* v, 3, 27:

"Dapples the drowsy east with spots of gray."

45-48. This passage has given much trouble. Some think it is the lark who *comes* to "bid good morrow." But this interpretation conflicts with grammar, as well as with the habits of the bird. Others, including Masson, think that *L'Allegro* is walking in the early morning and returns to his own cottage window to bid good morning to the inmates just astir. Still others, including the editor of the Clarendon Press edition, think that *L'Allegro*, awakened by the lark's song, throws open his casement and salutes the joyous outdoor life that is in sharp contrast with the dark interior, haunted by the melancholy shadows of "dull night." He then goes out to enjoy the characteristic scenes of early morning. This is the most consistent interpretation, making the thought harmonize with what immediately precedes and what follows. The verb *to come* is then in the same construction as *to live* and *to hear*, after *admit me*, l. 38. It is objected that the poet "would hardly use *come* if going to the window to bid good morrow to anybody or anything outside" (Rolfe). But why not? Would *go* be any better poetically?

45. In spite of sorrow: There seems to be a hint here of

the character *Il Penseroso*, who is oft seen in night's "pale career, Till civil-suited Morn appear." The word *sorrow* must be understood generically; it is the mental atmosphere of night in sharp contrast with that of morning. Some lines from Sylvester's *Du Bartas*, with which Milton was familiar, have a significant bearing upon this passage:

"The cheerful birds, chirping him sweet good morrow,
With nature's music do beguile his sorrow."

Also this couplet:

"Cease, sweet chantecleere,
To bid good morrow."

48. **Eglantine:** The eglantine is the same as sweetbrier, and is not *twisted*. So it has been suggested that the poet had in mind the honeysuckle. His picture of the vine-covered window is true, though his botany be faulty.

53. **Oft listening:** Notice the varied method of introducing the pictures, or "pleasures," in l. 49, *while*, and in l. 57, *some-time walking*. The participles are in agreement with *L'Allegro* understood.

55. **Hoar hill:** The hill is white with frost in the early morning. Or possibly gray, as dimly seen in the morning mists.

56. **High wood:** The wood is clear of underbrush, and the tall tree trunks are clearly seen.

57. **Not unseen:** The counterpart in *Il Penseroso*, l. 65, is "I walk unseen." Which poem was probably written first? In Burton's *Abstract* is the suggestive line, with the same rhyme: "Unheard, unsought for, or unseen."

59. **Right against, etc.:** Toward the sunrise. Cf. *Mid-summer Night's Dream*, iii, 2:

"Even till the Eastern gate, all fiery-red."

60. **State:** Stately progress through the sky. Note the exquisite harmony of verse movement and thought.

62. **In thousand liveries dight:** The clouds, as servants of the sun, are decked, or arrayed, in his splendidly colored liveries.

67. **Tells his tale:** Counts his sheep as they go forth to

pasture from the sheepfold. Cf. the "tale of the bricks," *Exodus*, v, 8. Dryden has "the tale of all the lambs." The original meaning of *tell* (Anglo-Saxon *tellan*) is to count, as to "tell one's beads." The shepherds would hardly be telling stories, or making love (as many would interpret the line) so early in the morning—certainly not *every* shepherd! The word *every* suggests the universal custom, so familiar in England.

69. **Straight:** Straightway, as in *Hamlet*, ii, 2: "We'll have a speech straight."

70. **Landskip:** This spelling carries the word back to the Anglo-Saxon *landscipe*. The suffix *scipe*, *scape*, is the modern *ship*, as in *friendship*; A.-S. *scapan*, to shape.

71. **Fallows gray:** Land is said to lie fallow when it is plowed and left unseeded for a season. Hence the appropriateness of the word in its original meaning, A.-S. *fealu*, yellow, as still in *fallow deer*. Milton's use extends the word to any neglected land, which might be *gray* with decaying stubble.

Meaning of *lawn* in this line? See *Hymn on the Nativity*, 80, and note.

75. **Daisies pied:** Cf. *Love's Labor's Lost*, v, 2:

"When daisies pied and violets blue."

77. **Towers and battlements:** Perhaps Windsor Castle was in the poet's mind, as he must have seen it often, four miles away, when walking about Horton. It must not be assumed, however, that all his pictures are taken from the Horton landscape; for example, there were no *mountains* there.

79. **Lies:** Reside, as frequently in the old writers. See 2 *Henry IV.*, iii, 2, and *Merry Wives of Windsor*, ii, 2.

80. **Cynosure:** The center of attraction. The name is applied to the polestar, which forms the tip of the tail, in the constellation of the Little Bear, the guide of the ancient mariners. Literally, dog's-tail, the constellation having first been likened to a dog. Cf. *Comus*, 341.

83. **Corydon, Thyrsis, Phillis (86), Thestylis (88):** Conventional names from the pastoral poetry of the Greeks and

Romans. Milton's fondness, at this period, for dealing with nature in this classical manner (Cf. *Lycidas* and *Comus*) led Dryden to remark that the poet saw nature "through the spectacles of books."

87. **Bower:** This word, in the sense of cottage or any humble dwelling, became one of the "stock words" of poetry during the succeeding century, "foolishly repeated by bad poets," as Wordsworth said.

91. **Secure:** Used in its original sense, *free from care*; Latin, *sine cura*. The murder of Hamlet's father was during his "secure hour."

92. **Upland hamlets:** In contrast to "towered cities," 117. *Upland*, remote from towns, hence rustic, countrified.

93. Such sports as these were prohibited by the Puritans. Cf. Ben Jonson's *Alchemist*, iii, 2: "Bells are profane; a tune may be religious."

94. **Rebeck:** A kind of fiddle, with three or four strings.

96. **Chequered shade:** As so often, Shakspeare was before Milton in the use of this charming picture. Cf. *Titus Andronicus*, ii, 3, 15:

"The green leaves quiver with the cooling wind
And make a chequered shadow on the ground."

97. **And young and old, etc.:** In the same construction as *many a youth*, after *rebecks sound*. *Come* is the past participle.

98. **Sunshine holiday:** Repeated in *Comus*, l. 959. Cf. "sunshine days," *Richard II.*, iv, 1, 221.

100. **Spicy nut-brown ale:** In Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* it is "the spiced wassail-bowl." It was ale warmed, sweetened, and spiced, with roasted crab apples in it. Cf. *Midsummer Night's Dream*, ii, 1, 46.

102. **Faery Mab:** See Mercutio's description of Mab in *Romeo and Juliet*, i, 4, 53-95; also the opening passages of Shelley's *Queen Mab*.

Junkets are a kind of cream cheese, or sweetened and flavored curds, so called from the rushes (It. *giuncata*) in which they

were wrapped. The word may be taken in the sense of sweet-meats, rural dainties in general.

Notice that *eat*, though preterit, must rhyme with *feat*, a common enough provincial pronunciation yet.

103, 104. She was pinched, etc.: Different members of the company, *she . . . he*, this one and that one, are telling their experiences. See Ben Jonson's description of Mab in *The Satyr*:

"This is Mab, the Mistress Faery,
That doth nightly rob the dairy. . .
She that pinches country wenches,
If they rub not clean their benches."

See also *Merry Wives of Windsor*, v, 5, 48; and Drayton's *Nymphidia*. Consult Keightley's *Fairy Mythology*.

104, 105. A semicolon after *led* would clear the sense of these lines, *he* being understood as the subject. One tells how she was punished by the fairies, another tells how he was led into trouble by Jack-o'-Lantern, and another tells the story of the *drudging goblin*.

104. *Friar's lantern*: Milton seems to confuse Friar Rush, a familiar character of folklore, with Jack-o'-Lantern, or Will-o'-the-Wisp, the *ignis fatuus*, a strange light seen over marshy places, by which the devil was supposed to lead people astray. But Milton probably followed Burton's confused classification of evil spirits, *Anatomy*, i, 2, 1. Scott (*Marmion*, iv, 1) seems to have followed Milton:

"Better we had through mire and bush
Been lantern-led by Friar Rush."

105. *Drudging goblin*: "That knavish sprite called Robin Goodfellow . . . That frights the maidens of the villagery" (*Midsummer Night's Dream*, ii, 1). Burton says: "Some put our fairies into this rank [terrestrial devils], which have been in former times adored with much superstition, with sweeping their houses, and setting of a pail of clean water, good victuals, and the like, and then they should not be pinched, but find money in their shoes, and be fortunate in their enterprises. . . .

A bigger kind there is of them called with us Hobgoblins, and Robin Goodfellows, that would in those superstitious times grind corn for a mess of milk, cut wood, or do any manner of drudgery work . . . these have several names in several places; we commonly call them Pucks." See Puck's description of himself, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, ii. 1, 40.

110. **Lubber fiend**: Not much like Shakspeare's Puck, but, as Masson says, "the genuine uncultured Robin Goodfellow of the rustics themselves."

110. **Lies him**: The ethical dative; so "sits him down." *Piers Plowman* has "went me to rest."

111. **Chimney's length**: Length of the fireplace.

114. **Ere the first cock**: At the first crowing of the cock, "that is the trumpet to the morn," the power of ghosts and spirits ceased for the night, and they must back to their confines. See *Hamlet*, i, 1, 150, and *Comus*, 432.

117. At this point we may suppose that *L'Allegro* goes to the city and there selects typical scenes for description; or we may suppose that he reënters his own cottage and spends the evening in reading and poetic contemplation. Objections to either interpretation may be found, but they are not serious, if proper freedom is given to the imagination. The second supposition seems the more consistent with the text; *high triumphs* were not evening amusements, and the courts of love, alluded to in 121, 122, could exist for Milton only in books. It also corresponds better to the evening occupations of *Il Penseroso*, making the contrast between the kinds of reading selected by the two characters.

120. **Weeds of peace**: The old meaning of *weeds* is garments, as "widow's weeds." Cf. *Troilus and Cressida*, iii, 3, 239: "To see great Hector in his weeds of peace."

Triumphs are grand shows, processions, and tournaments. See Bacon's *Essay on Masks and Triumphs*.

121. **Store**: A large number. Sidney has "store of faire ladies," and Spenser has "store of vermeil roses."

122. **Rain influence**: The word *influence* is here used in its

old astrological sense. The rays, or glances, or aspects of the stars, flowing down upon men, were believed to exercise a mysterious power over men's fortunes. See *Hymn on the Nativity*, 71; *Comus*, 336; *Paradise Lost*, iv, 669; vii, 375; ix, 107.

123. **Of wit or arms:** In the days of romance and chivalry, at the contests of *arms*, or tournaments, and at the contests of *wit*, or parliaments of love, the ladies adjudged the prizes, and there was masterful rivalry to *win the grace*, or "favor," of some high-born beauty.

125-128. A masque was often presented in honor of a marriage, in which Hymen, the god of marriage, would naturally assume a leading part. In the introduction to Ben Jonson's *Hymenæi*, the appearance of the god at these festivities is described: "In a saffron-colored robe, his under vestures white, his socks yellow, a yellow veil of silk on his left arm, his head crowned with roses and marjoram, in his right hand a torch of pine tree." The Elizabethan age delighted in gorgeous revelries. Cf. *Love's Labor's Lost*, v, 1, 117: "The king would have me present the princess, sweet chuck, with some delightful ostentation, or show, or pageant, or antic, or firework."

132. **Jonson's learned sock:** Ben Jonson was the most learned of the Elizabethan dramatists in the knowledge of books, and often made his dramas heavy with a pedantic profusion of classical lore. He was living when this line was written. The *sock*, a low-heeled shoe (*soccus*), was worn on the ancient stage in comedy, and the *buskin*, a high-heeled shoe (*cothurnus*), in tragedy; hence the words are symbolic of the two forms of drama. Jonson has, "Or when thy socks were on," in the verses prefixed to the Shakspeare Folio of 1623.

133. **Sweetest Shakspeare:** It is narrow criticism that sees in this couplet only inadequate and eccentric characterization of Shakspeare. Milton was selecting one phase of Shakspeare's art, the spontaneous and fluent artlessness of the comedies, as in *As You Like It*; and he doubtless had in mind the contrast to the heavy art of Jonson's comedies. That

Milton understood the full sweep of Shakspeare's power is shown in his *Epitaph on the Admirable Dramatic Poet, W. Shakspeare*.

It must be remembered that *Fancy*, in "Fancy's child," was equivalent to *imagination*.

135. *Eating cares*: Possibly a memory of Horace's *mordaces sollicitudines* (*Odes*, i, 18, 4), or *curas edaces* (*Odes*, ii, 11, 18).

136. *Lydian airs*: The Greeks are believed to have had three styles, or "modes," of music, the Dorian, the Phrygian, and the Lydian; the first was serious and stately, the second loud and lively, the third sweet and tender. Cf. Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*, 97: "Softly sweet, in Lydian measures."

138. *Meeting soul*: "The soul, in its eagerness, goes forth to meet and welcome the music" (Thurber).

On the rhyme *verse*—*pierce*, Browne says, "Perhaps *pierce* was once pronounced *perse*, retaining its French form from *perçer*." The proper name *Pierce* was formerly pronounced *Purse*. The same rhyme occurs in *At a Solemn Music*, 4. Shakspeare has the rhyme *pierce*—*rehearse* (*Richard II.*, v, 3, 127) and puns upon *Percy* and *pierce*, 1 *Henry IV.*, v, 3, 59.

139. *Bout*: Fold or turn. The return or repetition of certain musical phrases.

141. *Wanton heed*, etc.: The musician's art that conceals art. "The adjectives describe the appearance, the nouns the reality" (Browne).

145. *That*: So that; as often in the older poets.

146. *Golden slumber*: Justify the adjective *golden*. Cf. *Romeo and Juliet*, ii, 3, 38; 1 *Henry IV.*, ii, 3, 44; *Richard III.*, iv, 1, 84.

147. *Elysian flowers*: The Elysian fields, filled with the bloom of the asphodel, were the abode of the blessed after death. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, iii, 358–361.

149. *Quite*: Entirely; opposed to *half regained* in the next line.

Orpheus, the marvelous musician, sought his wife, Eurydice, in Hades, and so charmed Pluto with his music that he agreed

to release her on the condition that Orpheus should not look at her until they had reached the upper world; but Orpheus turned too soon, and she was lost to him again. Cf. *Il Penseroso*, 105; *Lycidas*, 58. Some of the many allusions to the Orpheus myth in English poetry should be looked up and compared with Milton's exquisite version. Cf. Pope's *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day*, Matthew Arnold's *Memorial Verses*, Dryden's *Song for St. Cecilia's Day*, and the *Song* in *King Henry VIII*, iii, 1, 3.

151-152. Compare the last lines of Marlowe's "*The Passionate Shepherd to his Love*":

"If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my Love."

IL PENSEROSO

1-30. The first thirty lines should be compared with the first twenty-four of *L'Allegro* with respect to the parallelisms, which Milton so carefully arranged. "So closely is the one poem framed on the model of the other," says Masson, "that it would be impossible to say, on mere internal evidence, which was written first."

1. Cf. Sylvester's *Du Bartas*:

"Hence, hence, false pleasures, momentary joys,
Mock us no more with your illuding toys."

2. **Without father**: "And therefore 'all mother,' as we say, or pure folly" (Rolfe).

3. **Bestead**: Stand by one, assist, avail.

4. **Fixed mind**: The serious mind, with firmly established and high purpose; the antithesis of the empty, "idle brain."

6. **Fond**: Foolish, as generally in the old poets. Cf. *King Lear*, iv, 7, 60: "I am a very foolish fond old man."

6-10. Curiously similar to this passage are some lines in Sylvester's *Du Bartas*:

"Confusedly about the silent bed
 Fantastic swarms of dreams were hovered . . .
 They make no noise, but right resemble may
 Th' unnumbered moats which in the sun do play."

Cf. Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale*, 868:

"As thik as motis in the sonne-beem."

10. **Pensioners**: Paid courtiers; like the famous guard that served Queen Elizabeth, composed of handsome gentlemen chosen from the finest families of the realm. Cf. *Midsummer Night's Dream*, ii. 1, 10. *Morpheus* is the god of sleep.

12. **Divinest Melancholy**: We must keep in mind that in this poem *Melancholy* is simply the pensive, thoughtful mood.

14. **To hit the sense**, etc.: Cf. *Antony and Cleopatra*, ii, 2, 207:

"A strange invisible perfume hits the sense."

17. **Esteem**: Used in its first meaning, estimation or opinion.

18. **Memnon's sister**: Memnon, king of Ethiopia, was an ally of the Trojans and was slain by Achilles. He was famed for his beauty and prowess, "black but comely," says Homer (*Odyssey*, xi, 522), and Milton assumes that his sister, Hemera, was equally beautiful.

19. **Starred Ethiop queen**: Cassiopeia, wife of Cepheus, king of Ethiopia, and mother of Andromeda. She boasted that she was more beautiful than the Nereids, and the offended "powers" demanded that Andromeda should be sacrificed to a sea monster, from which she was rescued by Perseus. After death Cassiopeia was transformed into the constellation now bearing her name; hence "starred."

23. **Vesta**: Goddess of the domestic hearth and of purity. Milton invents a fitting genealogy for Melancholy, as he did for Mirth. Why he chose Vesta is an interesting query. Upon this Masson says: "One remembers that Vesta was the goddess of the sacred eternal fire that could be tended only by vowed virginity; and here one is on the track of a peculiarly Miltonic idea. See *Comus*, 783-789."

24. **Solitary Saturn**: Saturn, the Greek Chronos (Time),

was father of the gods, reigning alone, and even devouring his own offspring. There is a subtle significance in this genealogy of Melancholy, if one can but find it. Browne thinks the poet means that Melancholy is "the offspring of Retirement and Culture." The student should consult the dictionaries of classical mythology for full accounts of Saturn and Vesta, and should trace the origin and meaning of the word *Saturnine*.

25. **Saturn's reign:** The "golden age" of the world, according to the Latin poets, the age of ideal simplicity, happiness, and innocence.

29. **Woody Ida:** Mount Ida in Crete, elsewhere associated by Milton with Saturn and Jove. See *Paradise Lost*, i, 515.

30. Finally Jove rebelled and usurped the throne of his father, Saturn. For the solitude of Saturn *after* this event, see the opening of Keats's *Hyperion*.

33. **Grain:** Color, probably dark purple. Small insects like the cochineal, from which dyes are obtained, have a grain-like appearance when dried. "Grain of Sarra," *Paradise Lost*, xi, 242, is purple of Tyre.

35. **Stole of cypress lawn:** A scarf, or veil, of cr pe. Cypress was a thin fabric, supposed to have been first made in Cyprus, hence often called *Cyprus*. "Cobweb lawn, or the very finest lawn, is often mentioned with Cyprus" (Nares). Cf. *Winter's Tale*, iv, 4, 222: "Cypress black as e'er was crow." Cf. Webster's *Malcontent*, iii, 1: "Why, dost think I cannot mourn, unles I wear my hat in *cipres*, like an alderman's heir?"

36. **Decent:** In the Horatian sense of comely, beautiful (Horace, *Odes*, iii, 27, 53: *decentes malas*).

39. **Commercing:** Communing.

40. **Rapt:** Enraptured. Latin *raptus*, seized. Cf. *Cymbeline*, i, 6, 51: "What, dear sir, thus raps you?"

42. **Forget thyself to marble:** Milton had already used this idea in the *Epitaph on Shakspeare*: "Dost make us marble with too much conceiving."

44. **As fast:** As firmly on earth as before on the skies.

46. **Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet:** The old idea

of asceticism as a means of attaining true spirituality. Wordsworth puts it, not so loftily: "Plain living and high thinking."

48. **About Jove's altar sing:** Possibly a memory of the opening lines of Hesiod's *Theogony*, where the Muses are represented as dancing "with tender feet" around "the dark-colored fountain [Aganippe, the sacred fount of Helicon] and altar of the mighty son of Chronos" (Zeus, or Jove).

50. See Bacon's opinion of this form of cultured pleasure, in the essay *Of Gardens*: "It is the purest of human pleasures; it is the greatest refreshment to the spirits of man." *Trim* is suggestive of the artificial style of gardening then in vogue, lawns "kept finely shorn," "little low hedges, round like welts," "images cut out in juniper," and "fair columns upon frames of carpenter's work."

52-54. From *Ezekiel*, X. See Milton's further use of the vision of Ezekiel in *Paradise Lost*, vi, 750-759. "A daring use of the vision," says Masson; "Milton ventures to name one of the Cherubs that there guide the fiery wheelings of the throne." Through *contemplation* one attains to the highest regions of spiritual vision and experience. Note that this word is rhythmically a word of five syllables.

55-56. Bring the mute Silence along, whispering *hist!* a warning to continue mute, unless the nightingale chooses to sing. Although *hist* is commonly regarded as an imperative, it seems much simpler to supply *bring* from l. 51, and understand the word in an adjectival or adverbial sense.

Philomela (Greek, *love-song*), the daughter of King Pandion of Athens, was changed into a nightingale. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, vi, 412.

57. **Plight:** Manner, or strain.

59. **Cynthia:** Diana, goddess of the moon (the Greek Artemis), so called from her birthplace, Mt. Cynthus in Delos. Cf. Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, vii, 7, 50:

"Joves dearest darling, she was bred and nurst
On Cynthus hill, whence she her name did take."

The *dragon yoke* Milton borrows from Ceres for Diana's use. In Shakspeare, Night is drawn by dragons: *Midsummer Night's Dream*, iii, 2, 379; *Cymbeline*, ii, 2, 48.

60. The accustomed oak: Cynthia, enchanted by the song, seems to pause over the oak where the bird is accustomed to sing.

61-64. The song of the nightingale introduces the night-time pleasures of *Il Penseroso*, as the song of the lark introduces the daytime pleasures of *L'Allegro*. The passage should be compared with other poets' descriptions of the nightingale. See Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*; Coleridge's *The Nightingale*; Wordsworth's *Nightingale and Stock-dove*; Barnefield's, *The Nightingale* (in *The Golden Treasury*). See also *Paradise Lost*, iv, 602; vii, 433; *Comus*, 234, and the sonnet, *To the Nightingale*.

65. Unseen: Because the *not unseen* of *L'Allegro*, 57, is the more unnatural expression, it is argued that *Il Penseroso* was written first, but the argument seems unnecessarily forced. As the poems are complementary, cross-stitched together from beginning to end, undoubtedly they were planned together and written together.

67. Wandering moon: Cf. *Midsummer Night's Dream*, iv, 1, 103: "Swifter than the wandering moon"; Horace's "*vaga luna*" (*Satires*, i, 8). Browne suggests comparison with Sidney's sonnet, "With how sad steps, O Moon."

68. Highest noon: The highest point of her course for the night, rather than "nearly full."

74. Curfew sound: The curfew bell (French *couvre-feu*, fire cover) rang at about nine o'clock, warning all householders to put out their fires, a custom as old in England as William the Conqueror. *Sound* would better be regarded as a verb, since *curfew* must be in agreement with the participle *swinging*.

75. Some wide-watered shore: The word "some," says Masson, "is a distinct intimation, if such were necessary, that the visual circumstance is ideal—that the *Penseroso* is not actually walking in any particular locality, but is imagining

himself here, there, and everywhere, at the bidding of his mood." The realistic interpreters have had a discouraging task in finding a *wide-watered shore* near Horton.

78. **Removed:** Remote, retired.

80. Cf. the "darkness visible" of *Paradise Lost*, i, 62-64.

82-83. The night-watch went his rounds proclaiming the hour, warning the sleepers "of fire and candle," and occasionally droning a prayer or "charm" for their security. Cf. Herrick's *Bellman*:

"From noise of scare-fires rest ye free,
From murder, Benedicite!
From all mischances that may fright
Your pleasing slumbers in the night,
Mercy secure ye all, and keep
The goblin from ye, while ye sleep,
Past one o'clock, and almost two,
My masters all, good day to you."

87. **Outwatch the Bear:** As the constellation of the Bear does not set, to *outwatch the Bear* is to sit up all night.

88. **Thrice-great Hermes:** Hermes Trismegistus (Greek, *thrice-great Mercury*), the name given by the Greeks to the fabled Egyptian philosopher Thot, whose reputed works upon philosophy are supposed to have been written by the Platonic philosophers at Alexandria in the fourth century.

88-92. **Unsphere the spirit of Plato**, etc.: Call Plato from the "mansion" where his "spirit lives insphered" (*Comus*, 1-3), to explain his doctrine of immortality, presented in the *Phædo*. This one does by study of his works.

93-96. According to the ancient philosophers, there are four elements, earth, air, fire, and water. Plato discussed demons in his dialogues, but it was through mediæval astrology and alchemy that they were related by true "consent," natural harmony or agreement, to the plants and elements. Burton, in the *Anatomy*, i, 2, 1, discourses extensively upon "Fiery spirits or devils, such as commonly work by blazing stars"; "Aërial spirits . . . such as keep quarter most part in the air, cause many tempests, thunder, and lightnings, tear oaks, fire

steeple, etc.”; “Water-devils” who “cause inundations, many times shipwrecks”; “Terrestrial devils,” as Fauns, Wood-nymphs, Genii, Fairies, etc., “which as they are most conversant with men, so they do them most harm,” and “seven kinds of ethereal Spirits or Angels, according to the number of the seven planets, Saturnine, Jovial, Martial, etc.” See Pope’s *Rape of the Lock*, i, 60–64.

98. **Sceptered pall:** Royal robe, or with scepter and robe. Latin *palla*, an outer garment, often of rich material. The hero of classic tragedy must be of royal or noble rank.

99–100. Œdipus, King of Thebes, Agamemnon, grandson of Pelops, and episodes of the Trojan war were the principal subjects of the great tragedies of Sophocles, Æschylus, and Euripides.

101–102. These lines seem clearly to refer to Shakspeare, thus being complementary to lines 133, 134 of *L’Allegro*.

102. **Buskined:** Tragic. See *L’Allegro*, l. 132, and note.

103. **Sad Virgin:** Melancholy, “sage and holy.” *Sad*, as in l. 43, is *serious*.

104. “O that we could recover the sacred hymns of the primitive semimythical Musæus of the Greeks, or the similar poems of his contemporary Orpheus” (Masson).

105–108. See *L’Allegro*, 145–150, and note.

109. **Him that left half told:** Chaucer, whose *Squire’s Tale* breaks off in the middle. Cambuscan, King of Tartary, had two sons, Camball and Algarsife, and a daughter, Canace. The King of India sent presents to the Tartar king and his daughter, a *horse of brass* (which would fly through the air with its rider, the “Enchanted Horse” of the *Arabian Nights*), a *glass* (the magic mirror of romance), and a *virtuous ring* (the miraculous virtue of which was to give the wearer the power of understanding the language of birds and the medicinal properties of plants). Spenser continued the story in the *Faerie Queene*.

112. **Who:** Of him who. *That*, in the next line, refers to Canace.

116. **Great bards beside, etc.:** The allusion here is un-

doubtedly to Spenser, whose *Faerie Queene* is filled with the allegorical meaning so happily described in l. 120. Tasso, Ariosto, and Boiardo may also have been in Milton's mind, for he was an admirer of all of these great poets of romance and chivalry.

118. **Turneys:** Tournaments. These contests, with the trophies won, and enchanted forests, were stock material with the romantic poets.

122. **Civil-suited:** Plain dress of the citizen as opposed to that of the court. See *L'Allegro*, 60-62. Cf. *Romeo and Juliet*, iii, 2, 10:

"Come, civil night,
Thou sober-suited matron all in black."

124. **Attic boy:** Cephalus, grandson of Cecrops, King of Athens. While hunting one day, Aurora, goddess of the dawn, stole him away from his good wife, Procris. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, vii, 701.

125. **Kerchief:** A *kerchief* is properly a head-covering (French, *couvre-chef*), hence *hand-kerchief* is a peculiar contradiction. Keep in mind the manner in which Morn appears in *L'Allegro*.

127. **Still:** Quiet, gentle.

130. **Minute-drops:** Drops falling a minute apart. Cf. *minute-guns*.

134. **Sylvan:** Sylvanus, god of woods and fields. *Brown* is used in the original sense of *dark* or *dusky*.

135. **Monumental:** "Memorial, old, telling of bygone years" (Masson).

140. **Profaner:** The *close covert* is to Melancholy a hallowed retreat, and any intrusion from the blustering, joyous world would be a kind of profanation.

141. **Garish:** Staring, glaring, gaudy. Cf. *Romeo and Juliet*, iii, 2, 25: "And pay no worship to the garish sun;" and Newman's *Lead, Kindly Light*: "I loved the garish day."

142. **Honeyed thigh:** The bee carries pollen on his thigh, and honey in a sack; a pardonable mistake for a poet-naturalist

in an unscientific age. In Drayton's *Owl* is the same mistake: "Each bee with honey laden to the thigh." And likewise Vergil seems to have observed (*Eclogues*, i, 56).

145. **Consort:** Companionship, other pleasing sounds of nature; or perhaps in the sense of concert, harmony. See *Hymn on the Nativity*, 132, and *At a Solemn Music*, 27.

146. **Dewy-feathered Sleep:** The hyphen is sometimes omitted, and *dewy* then regarded as a "coequal epithet of sleep," like "high embowed roof," l. 157, and "drowsy frightened steeds," *Comus*, 553. Milton has "the timely dew of sleep" (*Paradise Lost*, iv, 614), and Shakspeare has "the golden dew of sleep" (*Richard III*, iv, 1, 84) and "the honey-heavy dew of slumber" (*Julius Cæsar*, ii, 1, 230). Professor Cook points out the epithet in the Anglo-Saxon *Judith*—"urigfethera," the dewy-feathered (eagle). Morpheus had wings, according to the ancients, bat's wings, some thought, eagle's wings, as others thought.

146-150. It is impossible to make out just what picture Milton intended to present in these lines. The sense seems to run thus: Let some mysterious dream, hovering near the wings of sleep and appearing in an airy stream of lifelike scenes, be softly laid upon my eyelids. It has been suggested, with some pertinency, that the poet had in mind some of the old pictures of angels with scrolls streaming about their wings. Editorial ingenuity has been much distressed to find a coherent interpretation of the passage (which, perhaps, was intended to have only the airy incoherency of dreams); for example: "It is possible to hold that the Dream's wings are displayed (*i. e.*, reflected) in the airy stream, and that he waves at this reflection" (!). Ben Jonson's *Song of Night*, in the play *The Vision of Delight*, may have been sounding in Milton's memory, especially the line "Create of airy forms a stream."

154. **Genius:** Guardian spirit, as in *Lycidas*, 183. See the speech of the "Genius of the Wood," *Arcades*, 44.

155. **Due feet:** Feet in duty bound, as it were.

156. **Studious Cloister's pale:** The cloister of a cathedral

or college church was associated with study. Chaucer's Monk thought it a hard duty:

"Upon a book in cloystre alway to powre."

Pale is the space inclosed by the covered arcades of the cloister.

157. **Embowed roof:** The arched or vaulted ceiling of a Gothic church.

158. **Massy-proof:** Massive, and therefore proof against the weight they sustain. Milton used *massy* eleven times in his poems, and Shakspeare used it five times, and neither used *massive*.

159. **Storied windows richly dight:** Windows richly decorated with Bible stories pictured in the stained glass. Cf. *L'Allegro*, 62. "This whole magnificent passage [155-166] is a convincing proof of the high and lofty character of Milton's puritanism" (Trent).

164. **As may:** Such as may.

169. **Hairy gown:** Not the haircloth garment of penance, but the coarse, rough gown worn by monks and hermits.

170. **Spell of:** Study. See *Paradise Regained*, iv, 385. The hermits were credited with a special knowledge of astrology and of the medicinal virtues of herbs.

171. **Shew—dew:** The same rhyme occurs in *Comus*, 995-6.

174. **Prophetic strain:** Superior and ripened wisdom, like that of an ancient prophet.

175-176. In comparing these closing lines with the corresponding lines of *L'Allegro*, it is commonly noted that the poet is less doubtful about the pleasures of Melancholy than about the delights of Mirth. This, however, is a rather fanciful inference. The difference between the conditionality of "give" and of "if thou canst give" is hardly large enough to hang an argument upon. A more practical inference might be drawn from the exigency of a four-syllabled word to be dealt with in the same space.

COMUS

The list of "The Persons" was printed in the first edition of the poems (1645), but not in the second (1673). The title *Comus* was never used by Milton, but was added by later editors as an eminently appropriate title. The "Chief Persons" mentioned are the sons and daughter of the Earl of Bridgewater. Lawes acted the part of the Attendant Spirit; who took the parts of Comus and Sabrina is not known.

1. **Mansion:** Abiding place (Latin, *manere*, to abide). Cf. *Il Penseroso*, 92.

2. **Shapes of bright aërial spirits:** "An instance of the manner in which Milton endows spiritual beings with personality without making them too distinct" (Bell).

3. **Insphered:** Milton seems to have assigned the celestial beings to their proper spheres, thus disposing of them within the general system of the crystalline spheres that constituted the universe according to the Ptolemaic theory. See *Il Penseroso*, 88, and *Hymn on the Nativity*.

4. **In regions mild, etc.:** So Homer describes the dwelling place of the gods (*Odyssey*, vi, 42): "It is not shaken by wind, nor ever is it wet with rain, nor doth the snow come near it, but everywhere the clear air spreads cloudless about it, and a white light floats over all."

Note that *serene* is accented on the first syllable, like *enthroned* in l. 11 below, and *perplexed*, l. 36.

6. **And:** As not infrequently in Milton, the grammatical structure gets tangled in a long sentence. *And* should be a coördinate conjunction here, but it is not.

7. **Pestered:** Clogged, encumbered; from the old meaning of the word, to shackle a horse in pasture. *Pinfold* is the pound-fold, or pound, where stray cattle are shut up. See Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary*.

8. **Frail and feverish being:** Compare Macbeth's "After life's fitful fever" (iii, 2, 23)

9. **Virtue:** The whole length and breadth of meaning given by Milton to the word *Virtue* should be carefully considered in studying this poem.

10. **After this mortal change:** After the change of this mortal existence for immortality. It may mean, however, after this changing state of mortal life, an interpretation that makes the use of *this* less questionable.

11. Cf. *Revelation*, iv, 4: "And round about the throne were four and twenty seats; and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold."

12. **Due steps:** Steps that pursue the path of duty. Cf. *Il Penseroso*, 155.

13. **Golden key:** Cf. *Matthew*, xvi, 19. In *Lycidas*, l. 111, St. Peter is represented as having two keys to heaven:

"The golden opes, the iron shuts amain."

16. **Ambrosial weeds:** Celestial garments. *Ambrosia* was the food of the gods, as nectar was their drink; hence the general meaning of heavenly, celestial, immortal. For *weeds*, see note, *L'Allegro*, 120.

20. **High and nether Jove:** Jupiter, supreme god of Olympus and Pluto, god of the lower world, "Stygian Jove," as Ovid calls him. When Saturn was dethroned, his dominions were divided among his three sons, Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto, *i.e.*, the upper, the middle, and the under worlds. In the *Iliad*, xv, 190, Neptune says: "In three lots are all things divided, and each [of the three brothers] drew a domain of his own, and to me fell the hoary sea, to be my habitation forever, when we shook the lots" (Lang).

21. **Sea-girt isles:** Ben Jonson calls Britain a "sea-girt isle," and Shakspeare (*Richard II*, ii, 1, 46) describes England as "This precious stone set in the silver sea."

23. **The unadorned bosom:** The [otherwise] unadorned bosom.

24. **Tributary gods:** Some of these lesser sea divinities are named in ll. 867-884.

25. **Several:** Separate. In due order he gives to each an island. But *this isle*, i.e., Great Britain, is so large that he divides ("quarters") it among his "tributary gods." Some, however, prefer to take *quarters* literally, referring it to the four actual divisions of government at that time, England, Scotland, and the Lords-President of the North and of Wales.

28. Compare Shakspeare's splendid eulogy (*Richard II*, ii, 1, 40-61) beginning:

"This royal throne of kings, this sceptered isle."

29. **Blue-haired deities:** A variant of the previous expression "tributary gods." Bell quotes Ovid's expression for the sea-deities, "cærulei dii." Spenser gave the sea-nymphs "long green hair."

30. **This tract:** Wales. Here myth is dropped and real history begins.

31. **A noble Peer:** The Earl of Bridgewater, whose "new-intrusted scepter" is the appointment to be Lord-President of Wales and the Welsh Marches. *Mickle* is Anglo-Saxon and modern Scotch for *great*. Cf. *Romeo and Juliet*, ii, 3, 15: "O, mickle is the powerful grace that lies In herbs."

33. **Old and haughty nation:** The Welsh are older than the English, being descended from the aboriginal Britons.

34. **Fair offspring:** The two sons and daughter, who play the parts of the Brothers and the Lady in the Masque.

37. **Perplexed:** Entangled, intricate. Note the recessive accent.

40. **Tender age:** Lady Alice was not fifteen years old, and the brothers were younger.

45. **In hall or bower:** In the home of lord or peasant.

46-58: As in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, Milton here invents a mythical genealogy to suit his own poetic and moral purpose. Bacchus, the god of wine, typifying sensuous pleasure, and Circe, the enchantress, are the parents of Comus, the type of lawless and voluptuous revelry, the antithesis of all that is noble and virtuous. Comus had appeared in myth and poetry from Æschylus to Ben Jonson and Dekker, but

nowhere with the endowment of qualities given to him by Milton. Says Masson: "Milton's Comus is a creation of his own, for which he was as little indebted to Puteanus as to Ben Jonson. For the purpose of his Masque at Ludlow Castle he was bold enough to add a brand-new god, no less, to the classic Pantheon, and to import him into Britain."

48. **After the Tuscan mariners transformed:** A Latin construction for, After the transformation of the Tuscan mariners. The Tuscan or Tyrrhenian mariners, having Bacchus on board their ship, plotted to sell him as a slave, but he transformed them into dolphins, and the mast and oars of the ship into serpents. So much of the story is classic, and is found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, iii, 630, and in the Homeric *Hymn to Dionysus*. The visit to Circe's island is Milton's addition to the story.

49. **As the winds listed:** As the winds pleased. Cf. *John*, iii, 8: "The wind bloweth where it listeth."

50. **Who knows not Circe?** Everyone who has read the tenth chapter of the *Odyssey* knows the story of Circe, how she exercised her enchantments upon Ulysses and with the *charmed cup* transformed his men into swine. Browne suggests imitation of *Faerie Queene*, vi, 10, 16:

"Poore Colin Clout (who knowes not Colin Clout?)"

60. **Celtic and Iberian fields:** France and Spain.

61. **Ominous:** Portentous, filled with evil omens.

65. **Orient:** Bright. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, i, 546: "With orient colors waving."

66. **Drought of Phœbus:** Thirst caused by the sun.

67. **Fond:** Foolish, as in *Il Penseroso*, 6.

71. **Ounce:** The snow leopard, or mountain panther, inhabiting the mountains of Asia.

72. **All other parts, etc.:** In the *Odyssey* Circe's victims were completely transformed, but here only the heads are changed, for the convenience of stage presentation. See stage direction, l. 92 below.

73. **Perfect:** Complete. So degraded are they that they are unconscious of their degradation.

76. **Friends and native home forgot:** A shadowy recollection, perhaps, of Homer's description of the Lotus-Eaters (*Odyssey*, ix): "Whoever ate of the pleasant fruit of the lotus no longer wished to bring back news, nor to return home."

79. **Adventurous:** Likely to be full of adventures, or risks.

Glade is literally an opening in the wood, hence here used, by metonymy, for the wood itself.

80. **Glancing star:** Shooting star. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, iv, 556: "Swift as a shooting star."

83. **Sky-robres:** In l. 16, they were "ambrosial weeds."

Of Iris' woof; i.e., of rainbow stuff. Iris was the personification of the rainbow. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, xi, 244.

84. **A swain:** Henry Lawes, who acted the part.

87. **Knows to still:** So *Lycidas*, 10: "He knew Himself to sing," etc. Milton here, in his compliment to Lawes, seems to be delicately suggesting comparison with Orpheus. Cf. 494-496 below. Note the alliteration in this line and the next.

88. **Nor of his faith:** Nor is he less trustworthy as a friend than he is excellent as a musician.

90. **Likeliest:** Thyrsis, in his mountain watch, is most likely to be at hand, if there should be occasion for his aid.

92. **Viewless:** Invisible.

[**Stage direction:**] *Rout* is a disorderly crowd, a rabble. *Glistening* is glittering. "All that glisters is not gold" (*Merchant of Venice*, ii, 7, 65).

93. "The transition from the stately mood of the Attendant Spirit's exordium to the noisy exhilaration of Comus is marked by appropriate changes in the verse. Comus speaks in a lyric strain, and his tone is exultant. When he comes to serious business, in line 145, he also employs blank verse." (Thurber.)

93. **The star, etc.:** The evening star, Hesperus. As the morning star, Lucifer (light-bearer). Shakspeare calls it "the unfolding star" that "calls up the shepherd" (*Measure for Measure*, iv, 2, 218).

Top of heaven is the meridian; *i.e.*, it is midnight.

96. **Doth allay**: Doth cool the overheated axle of the golden chariot of Phœbus.

97. **Steep**: "Deep; like our 'high' sea, sea at a great distance from the shore" (Browne).

According to ancient geography the Atlantic was a great *stream*, encircling the earth.

98. **Slope sun**: As the sun sinks below the horizon the beams slope upward toward the dusky zenith. Milton first wrote "northern pole."

101. Compare *Psalms*, xix, 5.

105. **Rosy twine**: Roses entwined, wreaths of roses.

110. **Saws**: Wise sayings, proverbs. Cf. *As You Like It*, ii, 7, 156: "Full of wise saws and modern instances."

111. **Pure fire**: Free from the grosser elements of earth and water, of which mortals are made. The ancients associated pure fire with divinity. Cf. *Antony and Cleopatra*, v, 2, 292.

112. **Starry quire**: One of Milton's many allusions to the music of the spheres. See *Hymn on the Nativity*, 125, and note, and 1021 below, and *Arcades*, 63-73. Cf. *Merchant of Venice*, v, 1, 61.

116. **Morrice**: Morrice-dance, originally Moorish dance, because brought from Spain; a popular May-day dance in old England, in which the dancers often impersonated Robin Hood and his merry men.

117. **Shelves**: Flat ledges of rock.

118. **Pert**: Lively, nimble. *Dapper*, quick, German *tapfer*.

120. **Daisies trim**: Cf. *L'Allegro*, 75: "Meadows trim, with daisies pied."

121. **Wakes**: Originally *night-watches*, then night revels. The *wake* was at first a vigil kept on the eve of a saint's day, or at the consecration of a church. Compare the Irish and Scotch "wake."

129. **Cotyto**: A libidinous goddess of Thrace. *Dark-veiled* because her festival was held at midnight. The poet doubtless slurred the *to in to whom*,

132. **Stygian darkness**: Cf. *L'Allegro*, 3. *Spets*, an old form of *spits*. So *spettle* for *spittle*.

134. **Chair**: Chariot. In *Il Penseroso*, 59, Cynthia's chariot is drawn by a "dragon yoke."

135. **Hecat'**: Hecate, the goddess of witchcraft, of Thracian origin, associated with ghosts, haunted spots, howlings of dogs, and other nocturnal horrors. In *Macbeth* she is queen of the witches, "mistress of all their charms." The name is properly a word of three syllables.

139. **Nice**: Used sarcastically, overparticular, fastidious. *Indian steep* is merely the *Eastern hill*.

141. **Descry**: Reveal, or describe. The scrupulous Morn, shocked by what he sees, will *blab* it to the Sun, and the Sun will *tell* it to everybody.

143. **Solemnity**: Ceremony, the "rites" of, l. 125, and "dues" of, l. 137.

144. Compare *L'Allegro*, 34. The *round* is a dance in which all join hands. *Measure* is a dance, generally of a stately character.

147. **Shrouds**: Coverts, hiding-places.

151. **Wily trains**: Cunning enticements.

153. **Thus I hurl**: The actor personating Comus here throws some kind of glistening or inflammable powder into the air. For *dazzling spells* Milton first wrote *powdered spells*, corresponding to *magic dust* in 165 below.

155. **Blar illusion**: Deception, as if through eyes *bleared* or dimmed.

157. **Quaint habits**: Curious, unfamiliar clothes.

158. **Suspicious flight**: Flight caused by suspicion.

161. **Glozing**: Flattering, deceiving; from the old word *glose*, the gloss or commentary upon a classic text, often more deceptive than explanatory.

167. The thrifty villager is kept occupied until late at night with his country business.

168. **Fairly**: Softly, quietly.

174. **Loose unlettered minds**: Unrestrained and uncultured rustics.

175. **Granges:** Granaries.

176. **Bounteous Pan:** The god of all nature, upon whose *bounteous* favors country people depended for success with their crops and flocks. Cf. *Hymn of the Nativity*, 89, and note.

177. **Amiss:** In the wrong way.

179. **Wassailers:** Revelers, drinkers of healths. The Anglo-Saxon *wes hael*, be hale, of sound health, was the salutation at a drinking bout; hence *wassail-bowl*. Cf. *Hamlet*, i, 4, 9.

189. **Sad votarist:** A *votarist* is one who has taken a vow. *Sad* is serious. The *palmer* was a pilgrim who had made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and carried a palm branch as evidence of his achievement.

190. **Hindmost wheels, etc.:** Masson interprets the picture thus: "Evening succeeding day as the figure of a venerable gray-hooded mendicant might slowly follow the wheels of some rich man's chariot."

195-200. The complicated metaphor in these lines of Night shutting up the stars, with their lamps of everlasting oil, in a dark lantern, shows that Milton did not entirely escape the fantastic "conceits" of the lesser poets of his period, Donne, Cowley, and others, whom Dr. Johnson dubbed the "Metaphysical Poets." Note the awkward grammatical construction in l. 198.

204. **Single darkness:** Simple, unmixed darkness. Cf. *Matthew*, vi, 22.

205-209. "That wonderful passage in *Comus* of the airy tongues, perhaps the most imaginative in suggestion he ever wrote, was conjured out of a dry sentence in Purchas's abstract of Marco Polo. Such examples help us to understand the poet" (Lowell). We cannot be so sure of this definite indebtedness. In Heywood's *Hierarchy of Angels* is a passage about benighted travelers who saw strange human shapes, calling and beckoning to them. The *Anatomy of Melancholy* was a possible source. In Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, i. 1, 117, is a passage similar to Milton's lines. "But the *Tempest* may well have suggested the whole imagery" (Browne).

210. **May startle well:** May well startle.

212. **Strong siding:** We "side with" or "take the side" of one to give support or defense.

215. **Chastity:** A liberty taken with the Bible trio of cardinal virtues. Milton is here introducing the central theme of the poem.

219. **Glistening guardian:** Guardian angel, clothed in "pure ambrosial weeds" (l. 16). The form *glistening* was never used by Milton.

220. The Lady suddenly pauses, as she sees a *gleam* of light through the darkness surrounding her.

230. Some editors think they find the suggestion of this song in Ben Jonson's *Cynthia's Revels*, in Peele's *Old Wives' Tale*, and in Browne's *Inner Temple Masque*. Perhaps Milton needed no suggesting model.

231. **Airy shell:** The "hollow round" (*Nativity*, 102) or vault of heaven in which Echo lives.

232. **Meander:** A stream of many windings in Phrygia; hence our verb *meander*. Keightley thinks that Milton had in mind a likeness between the repeated windings of this river and "the repercussion of an echo."

237. **Thy Narcissus:** The nymph Echo loved in vain the beautiful Narcissus, and pined away until only her voice was left. As a punishment, Aphrodite caused Narcissus to fall in love with his own reflection in a fountain; unable to tear himself from the water's edge, he was changed to the flower that bears his name. Cf. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, iii, 339.

233-234. Hales feels sure of an allusion in these lines to Colonus, near Athens, celebrated by Sophocles for its night-ingles, and quotes from a guide-book: "In the opening of the year the whole grove is vocal with the melody of the night-ingles, and the ground is carpeted with violets, those national flowers of Athens." Aristophanes often calls Athens the "violet-crowned" city. In *Paradise Regained*, iv, 245, Milton definitely associates the nightingale, "the Attic bird," with this locality.

241-243. **Daughter of the Sphere:** Echo, born of the music of the spheres, will return to the skies to give a resounding grace to those heavenly harmonies. Cf. *At a Solemn Music*, 2:

"Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse."

244. **Mortal mixture of earth's mold:** Human being. The graceful personal compliment will be noted here, as in many other passages of the poem.

248. **His:** Its, referring to "something holy." It must be remembered that Milton used *its* only three times in his poetry.

251. **Fall:** Fall of the voice, cadence; a musical term of the period.

253. **Sirens:** The Sirens were beautiful maidens who dwelt on a rocky island near Sicily and tempted mariners to destruction by their sweet singing. In Homer's story (*Odyssey*, xii) there are but two Sirens, and they have no connection with Circe. It was by Circe's warning that Ulysses escaped, having put wax in his sailors' ears and having had himself lashed to the mast.

255. **Naiades:** Nymphs of fountains and streams. *Flowery-kirtled*, with gowns adorned with flowers. The Nymphs attendant upon Circe aided her in gathering herbs for her magic potions.

256. **Take the prisoned soul:** Take the soul prisoner.

257. **Lap it in Elysium:** See *L'Allegro*, 136 and 147.

257-259. Even the terrible sea-monsters Scylla and Charybdis were soothed by the music. Scylla, beloved by Glaucus, was changed by her jealous rival Circe into a monster, surrounded by barking dogs. She then jumped into the sea and became a rock. *Barking waves* is Vergil's "latrantibus undis" (*Æneid*, vii, 588). Near the rock Scylla was the awful whirlpool Charybdis. See *Odyssey*, xii, for Ulysses's adventure with these monsters. Cf. *Æneid*, iii, 551-560.

262. **Home-felt:** Heartfelt, deeply felt. Cf. "home-thrust," and "to strike home."

265. Cf. *Tempest*, i, 2, 426: "O you wonder! If you be maid or no."

267. **Unless the goddess:** Unless thou art the goddess.

268. **Pan:** See l. 176. *Sylvan*, Sylvanus, the god of fields and forests; Latin *silva*, a wood. Cf. *Il Penseroso*, 134.

269. **Forbidding, etc.:** In *Arcades*, 48, this power is attributed to the "Genius of the wood."

271. **Ill is lost:** A Latin idiom, *male perditur* (Keightley).

273. **Extreme shift:** Last resource. The phrase occurs in Sackville's *Mirror for Magistrates*, with the same accent, *extreme*: "In rustic armour, as in extream shift."

277-290. The line for line question and answer in this passage is an imitation of the dialogue in the Greek tragedies.

279. **Near-ushering:** Closely attending.

287. Is this loss important beyond the present need?

289. **Hebe:** The goddess of eternal youth, as well as cup-bearer to the gods.

291. **What time:** At what time, when. An idiom common in the old poets and in the Scriptures. Cf. *Lycidas*, 28. Noting the time of day by the unyoking of the tired oxen is thoroughly classical. Cf. *Iliad*, xvi, 779: "When the sun turned to the time of the loosing of oxen," and Vergil, *Eclogues*, ii, 66; Horace, *Odes*, iii, 6, 41.

297. **Port:** Bearing, mien. An obvious compliment to the Earl's two sons.

298. **Vision:** Pronounce as a trisyllable.

299. **Element:** The air, or sky, as frequently in Shakspeare. The clown in *Twelfth Night* (iii, 1) says the word is "over-worn," and so uses "welkin."

301. **Plighted:** Folded. Cf. *Lear*, i, i, 283:

"Time shall unfold what plighted cunning hides."

312. **Dingle:** A narrow valley between steep hills. *Bosky bourn* is a bushy stream (Scotch *burn*), or, as here used, the narrow valley of the stream.

315. **Stray attendance:** Strayed attendants.

317. **Low-roosted:** Low-nested. The lark builds her nest upon the ground, and the sloping and interlacing stems of grass or grain form a kind of natural thatch over it. It is not neces-

sary to take *roosting* in its ordinary sense of *perching*, thus bringing Milton's knowledge of the lark to shame; and *thatched pallet*, as a description of the nest, is quite accurate enough for poetry. *Thatched* may possibly refer to the substance and structure of the nest itself.

322-326. Compare Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, vi, 1, 1:

"Of Court, it seemes, men Courtesie doe call
For that it there most useth to abound;
And well beseemeth that in Princes hall
That virtue should be plentifully found,
Which of all goodly manners is the ground,
And roote of civill conversation."

Was Milton already looking askance at royalty?

326-328. Since I cannot be in any place where there is less guarantee of safety than here, I should not fear to change it for another.

329. **Square my trial**, etc.: Adjust my trial and make it proportionate to my strength. ^

332. **Benison**: Blessing. Browne cites *Faerie Queene*, iii, 1, 43:

"Of the poore traveiler that went astray
With thousand blessings she [the Moon] is heried [honored]."

333. Cf *Il Penseroso* 72 Also Fletcher's *Maid's Tragedy*, i, 1:

"Appear, no longer thy pale visage shroud,
But stoop thy silver horns quite through a cloud."

334. **Disinherit**: Dispossess. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, ii, 959.

336. **Influence**: See *Hymn on the Nativity*, 71, and note.

338. **Wicker hole**: The window hole of a peasant's cottage, filled in with wicker work instead of glass, which would be too expensive.

341. **Star of Arcady, or Tyrian Cynosure**: The Greeks steered their ships by the constellation of the Great Bear, any star of which was the *Star of Arcady*, so called because Callisto, daughter of the King of Arcady, or Arcadia, was changed into this constellation. The Tyrian, or Phœnician, mariners steered by

the Lesser Bear, the tail of which, containing the Polestar, was called *Cynosura*, dog's tail. Cf. *L'Allegro*, 80.

344. **Wattled cotes:** Inclosures made of plaited twigs. Cf. "hurdled cotes," *Paradise Lost*, iv, 185.

345. **Pastoral reed with oaten stops:** The Greek shepherds made their pipes of reeds or oaten stalks; hence the "oaten pipe" became symbolical of pastoral poetry. The *stops* are the holes cut in the stalk, over which the fingers are placed. Cf. *Lycidas*, 33, 88, 188.

346. **Whistle from the lodge:** The shepherd's whistle for his dog.

349. **Innumeros:** Innumerable. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, vii, 455.

359. **Overexquisite:** Overinquisitive, too curious.

360. **Cast the fashion:** Forecast the form or character.

361. **Grant they be so:** Grant that they are indeed evils.

362. **What need, etc.:** What need is there that a man anticipate his hour of grief? Cf. 752 below.

366. **So to seek:** So at a loss, so inexperienced. An idiom of Elizabethan English. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, viii, 197.

367. **Unprincipled:** Ignorant of the fundamental principles of virtue. Cf. *Samson Agonistes*, 760: "With goodness principled."

369. **Single want:** The mere want.

371. **Stir the constant mood:** Disturb the steadfast mood.

373-375. Cf. *Faerie Queene*, i, 1, 12: "Vertue gives herselfe light through darknesse for to wade." See lines 381-385 below.

376. **Seeks to:** Resorts to. A common idiom in the Authorized Version of the Bible. Cf. 1 *Kings*, x, 24; *Isaiah*, xi, 10; xix, 3.

377. **Contemplation:** Pronounce in five syllables, like *self-delusion*, 365 above. Sidney in the *Arcadia* calls "Solitariness" the "nurse of these contemplations." Cf. *Il Penseroso*, 54.

378. **Plumes:** Preens, arranges.

380. **All to-ruffled:** Completely ruffled. The particle *to* in old English is an intensive prefix to many verbs, as in

Chaucer, "The pot *to-breaketh*" means the pot *breaks in pieces*: so, *to-rende*, i.e., tear in pieces, *to-hewe*, hew in pieces. *All* is in the sense of *quite*.

382. **Center**: Center of the earth. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, i, 686, and *Hamlet*, ii, 2, 159.

393. **Hesperian tree**: The golden apples of Juno were guarded by three nymphs, daughters of Hesperus, and by the dragon Ladon (hence *dragon-watch*, 395). It was one of the "labors" of Hercules to obtain these apples.

395. **Unenchanted eye**: Eye that cannot be enchanted. So *unreproved*, *L'Allegro*, 40.

398. **Unsunned**: Hidden in dark places away from the sun. Spenser has Mammon "sunning his treasure hore" (*Faerie Queene*, ii, 7).

401. **Wink on**: Close the eyes to, forego.

404. **It recks me not**: I care not, take no account of night or loneliness. Cf. *Lycidas*, 122.

407. **Unowned**: Unprotected, as if unowned. Note the hypermetric syllables in this line, after the third and the fifth foot.

408. **Infer**: Argue. An obsolete use of the word. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, vii, 116; viii, 91.

413. **Squint suspicion**: Suspicion, looking sidewise habitually, is unable to see straight. Bell quotes Quarles:

"Hart-gnawing Hatred, and Squint-eyed Suspicion."

419. **If Heaven gave it**: Though Heaven gave it.

420. **'Tis chastity**: "The passage which begins here and ends at line 475 is a concentrated expression of the moral of the whole *Masque*, and an exposition also of a cardinal idea of Milton's philosophy" (Masson).

421. **Complete**: Accented on the first syllable, as in *Hamlet*, i, 4, 52. But cf. *Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester*, l. 12.

422. **Quivered nymph**: So *Belphæbe*, the personification of chastity in the *Faerie Queene*, ii, 3, 29, has "at her backe a bow

and quiver gay." Diana, the chaste huntress of the Romans, was armed with bow and quiver, and so, in Shakspeare's phrase, virginity is "Diana's livery" (*Pericles*, ii, 5, 9).

423. **Trace**: Traverse, find a way through. *Unharbored*, affording no harbor or resting place.

424. **Infamous**: Of bad fame; a Latinism. Horace so calls the Acroceraunian promontory, which was dangerous to ships (*Odès*, i, 3, 20). This word should probably be accented on the second syllable; *perilous* should not be reduced to a dissyllable, as many editors insist, even though Shakspeare did often say *parlous*.

426. **Bandite**: This is Milton's spelling of the word, which was, says Masson, "probably rather a new word about Milton's time"; from Italian *bandito*, an outlaw.

Mountaineer, here used in a bad sense as in *Cymbeline*, iv, 2, 120: "Who called me traitor, mountaineer."

429. **Shagged**: Rugged, shaggy, past participle of the verb *shag*.

430. **Unblenched**: Undaunted, unabashed.

431. **Be it not**: If it be not.

432. **Some say, etc.**: Cf. *Hamlet*, i, 1, 158-164; also Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, i, 1:

"Yet I have heard (my mother told it me,
And now I do believe it) if I keep
My virgin-flower uncropt, pure, chaste, and fair,
No goblin, wood-god, fairy, elf, or fiend,
Satyr, or other power that haunts the groves,
Shall hurt my body, or by vain illusion
Draw me to wander after idle fires;
Or voices calling me in dead of night
To make me follow, and so toll me on
Through mire and standing pools to find my ruin."

Milton's indebtedness to either one of these passages should not be too positively asserted, for such folklore material was current and common property in his day.

433. **In fog or fire**: See note, *Il Penseroso*, 93-96.

434. **Unlaid ghost**: A ghost that is not allayed, appeased,

or exorcised. According to popular belief ghosts could wander freely at night between curfew and cock-crow. Cf. *Lear*, iii, 4, 121; *Tempest*, v, 1, 40, and *Hamlet*, i, 1, 150. See *Hymn on the Nativity*, 232, and note.

436. **Swart faery of the mine**: In the *Anatomy of Melancholy* we find that "Subterranean devils are as common as the rest, and do as much harm. Olaus Magnus makes six kinds of them; some bigger, some less. These are commonly seen about mines of metals, and are some of them noxious; some again do no harm. The metal-men in many places account it good luck, a sign of treasure and rich ore when they see them."

439. **Schools of Greece**: The brother has been drawing his argument from the mediæval mythology of Europe, and now turns to the classic mythology.

442. **Silver-shafted**: The epithet is appropriate to the two-fold character of Diana, as goddess of the woods and hunting, and as goddess of the moon.

447. **Brinded**: Brindled, spotted. Cf. *Macbeth*, iv, 1, 1: "the brindled cat."

444. **Mountain-pard**: The ounce, or mountain panther.

447. **Snaky-headed Gorgon shield**: Medusa, one of the three terrible Gorgons, whose heads were covered with hissing serpents, was slain by Perseus, and Minerva, goddess of wisdom and of war, placed the monster's head in the center of her shield. All who looked at the head were turned to stone. Milton is giving to the myth his own interpretation.

451. **Dashed**: Put out of countenance, shamed.

454. **Sincerely so**: Sincerely chaste.

453-474. **So dear to Heaven, etc.**: "The language of mythological allusion now ceases, and the speaker passes, in his own name, into a strain of Platonic philosophy tinged with Christianity" (Masson).

455. **Liveried angels lackey her**: Ministering angels attend upon her like liveried servants in palaces of the great.

457. **Vision**: A trisyllable; so *contagion*, 467 below.

459. **Oft converse**: Frequent communion. The noun *con*

verse is accented on the second syllable by Milton and Shakspeare.

462. **And turns:** Masson thinks the change to the indicative significant, "as if certainty had so increased before the second clause that it could be stated as a fact."

468. **Imbodies and imbrutes:** Becomes material and brute-like. These lines reproduce the substance of a passage in Plato's *Phædo*. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, ix, 166.

469. **Divine property:** Milton elsewhere calls the soul "that divine particle of God's breathing."

470. **Gloomy shadows, etc.:** The impure soul at death "is engrossed by the corporeal" and "depressed and dragged down again into the visible world below—prowling about tombs and sepulchers, in the neighborhood of which, as they tell us, are seen certain ghostly apparitions of souls which have not departed pure, but are cloyed with sight and therefore visible" (*Phædo*, Jowett's trans.).

473. **Sensuality:** Milton's spelling; the modern spelling, *sensuality*, mars the meter.

475. **How charming, etc.:** "A special compliment to Plato, who has just been quoted" (Masson). Milton greatly admired Plato and spoke of his work as "the divine volume of Plato."

478. **Musical as is Apollo's lute:** Cf. *Love's Labor's Lost*, iv, 3, 342: "As sweet and musical as bright Apollo's lute."

483. **Night foundered:** "Swallowed up in night, as a ship is in the sea when she *founders*" (Masson).

494. **Thyrsis:** A name taken from the pastoral poetry of Theocritus. The sentence is a compliment to Henry Lawes, who is acting the part of *Thyrsis*. The rhymed couplets were doubtless intended to give a pastoral effect appropriate to the character, thus also adding to the covert compliment.

501. **Next joy:** The younger son. He addresses both brothers.

509. **Sadly:** Seriously, truly; a frequent use of the word in the Elizabethan period. Bacon, in his *Essays*, says: "To speak now in a sad and serious manner."

515. **What the sage poets, etc.:** Homer describes the *Chimæra* and the *enchanted isles* of Circe and Calypso, and Vergil describes the descent of Orpheus to hell through the *rifted rock* of Tænarus. In *Paradise Lost*, iii, 19, Milton speaks of himself as "taught by the heavenly Muse." In these, as in many other passages, he suggests his ideal of the lofty character of the true poet's calling.

517. **Chimæras:** The Chimæra was a fire-breathing monster, with the head of a lion, the body of a goat, and the tail of a dragon, which was slain by Bellerophon. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, ii, 628.

520. **Navel:** Center. The Greeks called the temple of Apollo at Delphi "the navel of the earth."

522. **Of Bacchus and of Circe born:** This parentage of Comus is Milton's invention. See ll. 46-66 above. In later classic mythology *Comus* is the god of mirth; Milton added the necromantic qualities.

526. **Murmurs:** Incantations.

529. **Unmolding reason's mintage:** Destroying the marks of a rational soul stamped upon the face. The metaphor is from the melting of coins for the purpose of restamping. *Charactered* is accented on the second syllable, as often in Shakspeare, and is used in the sense of the original Greek word, *Χαρακτήρ*, an engraved or stamped mark.

531. **Hilly crofts, etc.:** Small inclosed fields that overhang the glade below.

533. **Monstrous rout:** Troops of monsters. See stage direction, l. 92 above, for the entrance of *Comus*.

534. **Stabled wolves:** Wolves in their dens, or perhaps "wolves that have got into the sheepfold." Milton may have had in mind Vergil's "*Triste lupus stabulis*" (*Eclogues*, iii, 80).

535. **Hecate:** See note on 135 above.

539. **Unweeting:** Unwitting, unsuspecting.

540. **By then:** When, by the time that.

546. **Pleasing fit of melancholy:** This is the specialized,

poetic melancholy of *Il Penseroso*. In l. 810 below the older sense of the word is used.

547. **Meditate my rural minstrelsy:** Compose or sing a pastoral song. A Vergilian phrase (*Eclogues*, i and vi). Cf. *Lycidas*, 66. The Latin *meditor* means not only *to think upon*, but also *to exercise oneself in, to practice*.

553. **Drowsy-flighted:** Drowsily flying. The early editions have *drowsie frighted*, meaning the drowsy steeds that had been frightened; but Milton's corrected manuscript has *drowsy flighted*, which with the hyphen inserted is the more poetical and a characteristic Miltonic epithet. This reading is adopted by Masson, though with hesitation.

555. **At last a soft, etc.:** "A renewed compliment to the Echo-song of the Lady, and in language of memorable splendor" (Masson). See ll. 244-252 above.

557. **That:** So that. *So* before *that* was frequently omitted in the language of that period. The idea of *Silence* charmed by music occurs again in *Paradise Lost*, iv, 604.

560. **Still:** Ever, always; a common usage of that period.

568. **Lawns:** Glades among trees. This word generally in Milton means any open stretch of grass ground. Cf. *L'Allegro*, 71.

575. **Such two:** Two such as she describes.

585. **Period:** Sentence. *For me* is *for my part*, or *so far as I am concerned*.

588. **Erring men call:** Men erroneously call.

589. **Virtue may be assailed, etc.:** This was a cardinal principle of Milton's belief and life. The passage (586-599), says Masson, is "a peculiarly Miltonic passage; one of those that ought to be got by heart both on its own account and in memory of Milton."

591. **That which mischief, etc.:** That which was intended to be the source of most harm shall in the fortunate experience prove to be the source of most glory.

597. **This:** This fundamental truth.

598. **Pillared firmament:** The firmament is conceived of as

the roof of the earth, resting upon massive pillars, like the roof of a great cathedral.

604. **Acheron**: The infernal river, here used by metonymy for Hell. Browne quotes from Phineas Fletcher's *Locusts* (1627): "All hell run out, and sooty flags display."

605. **Harpies and Hydras**: The *Harpies* were unclean monsters, with the head of a woman and the body and claws of a bird. Cf. Vergil's *Æneid*, iii, 216. *Hydras* are monstrous water-serpents. The nine-headed Hydra was slain by Hercules.

606. **Ind**: "India, the region of black enchantments" (Masson).

607. **Purchase**: Booty, ill-gotten gain; as often in Spenser, Shakspeare, and others of the period. Fr., *pourchasser*, to seek for and obtain—sometimes by fair means or foul.

608. **Curls**: The ancient voluptuaries wore curls.

611. **Stead**: Service. Cf. the phrase, "stand one in stead."

614. **Unthread its joints, etc.**: Make limp and powerless. Cf. *Tempest*, iv, 1, 259.

619. **A certain shepherd lad**: It is believed that this refers to Milton's dear friend Charles Diodati, who was a physician and botanist. Cf. *Epitaphium Damonis*, 150-154.

620. **To see to**: To look at. Cf. 1 *Samuel*, xvi, 12: "goodly to look to," and *Ezekiel*, xxiii, 15.

621. **Virtuous**: Possessing medicinal virtue or power.

627. **Simples**: Medicinal herbs; "so called because each vegetable was supposed to possess its particular virtue, and therefore to constitute a simple remedy" (*Cen. Dic.*). Cf. *Romeo and Juliet*, ii, 3, 8-16.

633. **Golden flower**: Coleridge suggested that by the prickles and golden flower Milton symbolized the sorrows and triumph of the Christian life.

"There can be little doubt," says Professor Moody, "that the plant symbolizes Christian grace; and that when the poet declares that the golden flower which it bears under better skies cannot come to blossom in the harsh soil where the shepherd found it, he is brooding over the corruptions of the English

Church, in a spirit only less intense than that which three years later found such surprising expression within the fantastic framework of *Lycidas*."

634. **And like esteemed:** Unappreciated, as it is unknown.

635. **Clouted shoon:** Patched shoes. *Shoon* is the Anglo-Saxon plural in *n* as in *oxen*. Cf. 2 *Henry VI*, iv, 2, 195.

636. **Med'cinal:** Milton's spelling. But the full form occurs in *Samson Agonistes*, 627.

Moly: The plant that Hermes (Mercury) gave to Ulysses, with which he resisted the charms of Circe (*Odyssey*, x, 280). Milton may have had in mind, as well as Homer's story, a passage in Ascham's *Scholemaster*: "The true medicine against enchantments of Circe, the vanity of licentious pleasure, the enticements of all sin, is, in Homer, the herb Moly, with the black root and white flower, sour at first, but sweet in the end; which Hesiod termeth the study of Virtue, hard and irksome in the beginning, but in the end easy and pleasant." Cf. the Latin *Elegy* I, 90:

"Immortal Moly shall secure my heart
From all the sorcery of Circean art."

638. **Hæmony:** The name and the plant are of Milton's invention. *Hæmonia* was a name for Thessaly, a part of Greece noted for magic. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, vii, 264, *Hæmonian* is used in the sense of *magical*.

639. **Sovran use:** Supremely efficacious. On the form *sorvan*, see *Hymn on Nativity*, 60, note.

640. **Mildew blast:** Cf. *Hamlet*, iii, 4, 64: "Here is your husband, like a mildew'd ear, Blasting his wholesome brother."

641. **Furies:** The three goddesses of vengeance, who were like Gorgons, with snakes for hair, and scourges or sickles in their hands.

642. **Little reckoning made:** Thought little of it. Cf. *Lycidas*, 116.

646. **Lime-twigs:** Snares; twigs covered with a viscous, limelike paste, to catch birds. This metaphor is frequent in Shakspeare, as *Hamlet*, iii, 3, 68; 3 *Henry VI*, iii, 3, 16.

651. **Break his glass:** So Sir Guyon breaks the golden cup of the enchantress in *Faerie Queene*, i, 12, 56.

653. **Seize his wand:** The reason for seizing his magic wand is explained in 815-819 below.

655. **Like the sons of Vulcan:** An allusion to the giant Cacus, son of Vulcan, in his contest with Hercules. Vergil's *Æneid*, viii, 252:

“Faucibus ingentem fumum, mirabile dictu,
Evomit.”

661. **Daphne:** The beautiful nymph, Daphne, when pursued by Apollo, prayed to the gods to help her to escape, and was transformed into a laurel tree (Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, i).

673. **His:** Its. See *Hymn on Nativity*, 106, note.

675. **Nepenthes:** The drug which Helen gave to Menelaus: “Presently she cast a drug into the wine they drank, a drug to lull all pain and anger, and bring forgetfulness of every sorrow. Whoso should drink a draught thereof, when it is mingled in the bowl, on that day he would let no tear fall down his cheeks, not though his father and his mother died. . . . Medicines of such virtue and so helpful had the daughter of Zeus, which, Polydamna, the wife of Thon, had given her, a woman of Egypt” (*Odyssey*, iv, 220 et seq.).

685. **Unexempt condition:** Condition from which no one is exempt. *Condition* here has four syllables.

693. **The cottage:** See 320 above.

694. **Aspects:** Accented on the last syllable, as regularly in that period.

698. **Visored:** Masked.

700. **Liquorish:** Pleasing to the taste.

761. **Draught for Juno:** Juno was queen of the gods, whose drink was nectar.

762. **None but such, etc.:** It was noted by Newton that this sentence is a translation of l. 618, in the *Medea* of Euripides: “The gifts of the bad man are without profit.”

707. **Budge doctors of the Stoic fur:** *Budge*, as a noun,

meant a kind of fur used to trim a scholastic gown, such as a "doctor" would wear. As an adjective it meant pompous, formal, pedantic. The two meanings may possibly be combined here, giving the sense, "these pretentious teachers of the Stoic philosophy."

708. **The Cynic tub:** The tub of Diogenes, the Cynic. The Cynics and Stoics were supposed to renounce all things pleasing to the appetites.

711. **Unwithdrawing:** Continually liberal.

719. **Hutched:** Stowed away. A *hutch* is a chest or bin, as "bolting-hutch," a box for bolted meal, and "rabbit-hutch."

722. **Frieze:** Coarse woolen cloth.

728. **Who:** Nature. *Strangled*, suffocated.

729. **Winged air darked, etc.:** The air darkened with multitudes of flying birds.

732. **O'erfraught:** Overfreighted, overburdened.

733. **Forehead of the deep:** The surface of the deep earth in general may possibly be the meaning, for Milton could hardly have shared the ignorant belief that diamonds and other precious gems are to be found at the bottom of the sea. For *bestud with stars* the original manuscript has "bestud the centre [*i.e.*, center of the earth] with star-light."

They below, the people of the lower world.

739-755. **Beauty is Nature's coin, etc.:** "The idea that runs through these seventeen lines is a favorite one with the old poets; and Warton and Todd cite parallel passages from Shakspeare, Spenser, Daniel, Fletcher, and Drayton" (Masson). Cf. *Midsummer Night's Dream*, i, 1, 76-78, and *Sonnets* i-vi, "which are pervaded by the idea in all its subtleties."

746. **High solemnities:** Stately festivities.

748. **It is for homely features, etc.:** Note the play on words. Milton does not often indulge in puns, like Shakspeare. Cf. *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, i, 1, 2: "Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits."

750. **Sorry grain:** Poor color. See *Il Penseroso*, 33, note.

751. **Ply the sampler**, etc.: Work a sampler (exemplar) and card (with teazels) the housewife's wool, the approved occupations of our great-great-grandmothers.

752. **Vermeil-tinctured**: Vermilion colored; Latin *vermilis*, little woven, the cochineal insect, from which the color was obtained. Cf. Spenser's *Prothalamion*: "With store of vermeil roses."

756-761. These lines are to be regarded as an *aside*.

758. **As mine eyes**: Deceive my judgment as he has my eyes.

760. **Bolt**: Sift, refine, make alluring; as the miller *bolts* meal, separates it from the bran.

767. **Spare temperance**: Cf. *Il Penseroso*, 46: "Spare Fast, that oft with gods doth diet."

768-774. **If every just man**, etc.: Compare Gloster's speech, *Lear*, iv, 1, 67-74.

780. **Enow**: A provincial form of *enough*, originally plural.

780-799. **To him that dares**, etc.: "A recurrence, by the sister, with even more mystic fervor, to that Platonic and Miltonic doctrine which had already been propounded by the Elder Brother, lines 420-475" (Masson).

785. **Sublime notion**, etc.: In the *Apology for Smectymnuus* Milton speaks of studying in the "divine volume of Plato" about the "abstracted sublimities" of Chastity and Love, and also in Holy Scriptures which unfold "these chaste and high mysteries."

791. **Fence**: Argumentation. A metaphor from the art of fencing, the elaborate niceties of which are humorously described in *Romeo and Juliet*, ii, 4, 19 et seq.

794. **Rapt**: Enraptured. Cf. *Il Penseroso*, 40.

797. **The brute earth**, etc.: Earth himself would be humanized and lend me sympathetic aid. A memory or translation of Horace's "bruta tellus" (*Odes*, i, 34, 9).

803-806. **The wrath of Jove**, etc.: An allusion to the war of Jupiter (Zeus) against Saturn (Cronos) and his allies, the Titans, who were cast down from heaven into Tartarus or Erebus, the region of darkness.

804. **Speaks thunder, etc.:** With thunder condemns to the chains, etc.

808. **Canon laws of our foundation:** Fundamental laws of our society. "A humorous application of the language of universities and other foundations" (Keightley).

809. **'Tis but the lees, etc.:** A bit of the old philosophy of the "four humors." Todd quotes Nash's *Terrors of the Night* (1594): "The grossest part of our blood is the *melancholy humor*, which . . . with his thick-steaming, fevery vapors, casteth a mist over the spirit. . . . It sinketh down to the bottom like the *lees of the wine*, corrupting all the blood, and is the cause of lunacy "

816. **Rod reversed:** According to the practices of the magic art, the spell of enchantment could be removed by reversing the magic rod and pronouncing the words of the charm backward. In this way Circe restored the followers of Ulysses to their human form (Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, xiv, 300). *Mutters*, the words of the incantation, like *murmurs*, l. 526 above.

822. **Melibæus:** A common name for a shepherd in pastoral poetry, used by Vergil (*Eclogue* I). It here refers undoubtedly to Spenser, who gives the story of *Sabrina* in the *Faerie Queene*, ii, 10, 14. The story is in Drayton's *Polyolbion* and Warner's *Albion's England*, and Milton, in his *History of Britain*, copies it directly from the old chronicler, Geoffrey of Monmouth, whom some editors identify with *Melibæus*. But the *soothest* [truest] *shepherd*, in l. 823, must be a poet, and Spenser was much admired by Milton.

827. **Whilom:** Of old, formerly. An obsolete word in Milton's time. Cf. Chaucer's "Whilom, as olde stories tellen us."

828. **Brute:** Brutus, grandson of Aeneas, the mythical founder of Britain.

830. **Enraged stepdame:** Guendolen had been put aside by Locrine, in favor of a former love, Estrilidis, the mother of Sabrina. Milton changes the end of the story, to make it more poetical. According to his prose version, Guendolen makes war upon her husband, kills him, and throws the queen

and her daughter into the river, "and, to have a monument of revenge, proclaims that the stream be henceforth called after the damsel's name, which by length of time is changed now to *Sabrina* or *Severn*."

835. **Aged Nereus' hall:** His dwelling in the ocean caves. *Nereus* is the wise "old man of the sea," father of the *Nereids*, or sea-nymphs. Here Milton mixes Greek and British mythology, a common recipe with him for making new poet-lore.

838. **Lavers:** Baths. *Asphodel* (modern daffodil) is the immortal flower growing in the meadows of *Elysium*.

839. **Porch and inlet of each sense, etc.:** So Hamlet's ghost says he was poisoned (*Hamlet*, i, 5, 64): "In the porches of my ears did pour The leprous distilment." It is well to keep in mind the fact that Harvey published to the world his discovery of the circulation of the blood only six years before *Comus* was acted.

841. **Immortal change:** Change to immortality.

842. **Goddess of the river:** "She became the protecting deity of the river, as *Lycidas* of the shore off which he had met his death" (Hale). Cf. *Lycidas*, 183.

845. **Helping all urchin blasts, etc.:** Remedying the blighting influences of urchins or goblins, and injuries caused by mischievous elves. The *urchin* was a hedgehog, the form sometimes assumed by evil spirits. Cf. Caliban's tribulations, *Tempest*, ii, 2, 4.

846. **Shrewd:** Mischievous, wicked; originally *shrew-ed*, *cursed*. Bacon says in the *Essays*: "An ant is a *shrewd* thing in an orchard, or garden."

852. **She can unlock, etc.:** This feature of the legend is Milton's invention, as neither Spenser nor old Geoffrey gives it.

863. **Loose train, etc.:** The source and explanation of this line may possibly be contained in Todd's quotation from Nash's *Terrors of the Night*: "Their hair they wore *loose*, unrolled about their shoulders, whose dangling *amber trammels*, reaching down beneath their knees, seem to *drop balm* on their delicious bodies." Qualities of precious clearness and fragrance were associated with amber. Cf. *Samson Agonistes*, 720.

868. **Great Oceanus:** The ancients conceived of the ocean as a huge stream flowing round the earth, of which *Oceanus* was the presiding deity.

870. **Tethys:** Wife of Oceanus, and mother of the river gods. The epithets in these lines, *great Oceanus*, *earth-shaking Neptune*, *Tethys' majestic pace*, are from Homer and Hesiod.

872. **Carpathian wizard:** Proteus, who had the power of assuming different shapes; he lived in the Carpathian Sea, and had a shepherd's *hook* because he tended the "herds of loathly sea-calves" (*Odyssey*, iv, 385). In Vergil's *Georgics*, iv, 387, he is called a seer, or *wizard* (*vates*).

873. **Scaly Triton:** Son of Neptune, the lower part of whose body was a fish. He rode over the waves driving his sea-horses and blowing a conch-shell horn to raise or still the sea, at Neptune's command.

874. **Soothsaying Glaucus:** A Bæotian fisherman who was changed to a sea-god by Oceanus, regarded by fishermen and sailors as a prophet.

875. **Leucothea:** Ino, the daughter of Cadmus, fled from her mad husband, and with her infant son plunged into the sea. Neptune made them sea-deities, giving to her a new name, *Leucothea*, the white goddess, and to the son the name *Pelæmon*, who became the protecting deity of bays and harbors.

876. **Thetis:** The most beautiful of the Nereids, mother of Achilles. Homer calls her "silver-footed." Trench calls *tinsel-slippered* and other similar Miltonic epithets, "poems in miniature."

878. **Sirens:** See l. 253 above, and note. Two of the Sirens were *Parthenope* and *Ligea*. The *tomb* was at Naples. *Ligea's golden comb* suggests the mermaids of Northern mythology, as in Tennyson's poem *The Mermaid*:

"With a comb of pearl I would comb my hair," etc.

893. **Azurn sheen:** Azure brightness. *Turkis* is turquoise; literally, the Turkish-stone, because brought from Persia through Turkey.

897. **Printless feet:** Cf. *Tempest*, v, 1, 34: "Ye that on the sands with printless foot Do chase the ebbing Neptune." The fancy in the next two lines is common property with the poets back to Vergil. Cf. *Æneid*, vii, 808; Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, 373; Tennyson's *Talking Oak*, 131. The pretty phrase *velvet head* is found in Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*, which Milton is thought to have had perilously in mind while writing this part of *Comus*:

"See the dewdrops, how they kiss
Every little flower that is,
Hanging on their velvet heads."

914. **Thrice:** Charms were regularly "wound up" by threes or combinations of threes. Cf. *Macbeth*, i, 3, 35.

916. **Marble venom'd seat:** The enchanted chair.

921. **Amphitrite:** Wife of Neptune and queen of the sea.

923. **Anchises:** Father of Æneas, who was fabled to be the grandfather of Brutus (828 above), founder of Britain, who was the grandfather of Sabrina.

929. **Thy tresses fair:** "The foliage on thy banks" (Rolfe).

933. **Beryl:** A precious stone of varied tints, one variety of which is the emerald. As it is not found in the Severn (any more than is gold), Milton probably took it from the foundations of the New Jerusalem (*Revelations*, xxi, 20). The extravagant praise of the Severn in this passage would naturally be agreeable to the people of Ludlow.

934-937. The simplest treatment of these troublesome lines is to repeat *crowned* before *With groves*, and read *upon thy banks* after *cinnamon*. This will answer the grammatical needs fairly well. How do we justify Milton's use of *myrrh* and *cinnamon* as native products of the Welsh marches?

945-955. **Not many furlongs thence, etc.:** The reader should here keep in mind the place, the occasion, and the changes of stage scenery.

958. **Back, shepherds, etc.:** The Spirit with the Brothers and the Lady here interrupt the rustic dancing, which began as the curtain rose.

959. **Sunshine holiday:** Cf. *L'Allegro*, 98. From this line it appears to be morning, or daylight, when the Spirit and his companions return and find the townspeople engaged in their congratulatory sports.

961. **Other trippings:** The more graceful dance in *court guise*, which begins at the close of the next speech.

964. **Dryades:** Wood nymphs, who were fond of making merry with Apollo, Mercury, and Pan.

Mincing is moving with light and graceful steps, contrasted with the jig steps and rude *duck and nod* of the country folk.

966. **Noble Lord, etc.:** "Imagine the cheering when Lawes, advancing with the three young ones, addressed this speech to the Earl and Countess of Bridgewater, they perhaps rising and bowing" (Masson).

970. **Timely:** In good time.

972. **Assays:** Trials, experiences.

975. This line epitomizes Comus and his followers, and with the preceding line expresses the whole moral scheme of the play.

976. **To the ocean, etc.:** Masson notes that these four lines are in the very rhythm and rhyme of the first four of Ariel's song in the *Tempest*, v, 1, 88.

982. **Of Hesperus, etc.:** See 393 above, and note.

984. **Crisped shades:** The foliage curled or rippled by the wind. Cf. "crisped brooks" (ruffled by the wind), *Paradise Lost*, iv, 237.

985. **Spruce:** Neatly attired. *Spruce* was originally *Pruce*, or Prussia, which apparently was once regarded as a land of luxury and fashion; *spruce fir* was Prussian fir. See *Cen. Dic.*

986. **Graces:** See *L'Allegro*, 15, note. The *Hours* (Horæ) are the goddesses of the seasons, and gate-keepers of Olympus, who open and shut the cloud-gates, *i.e.*, control the storms and regulate the seasons. The "Dance of the Hours" was a symbol of the course of the seasons. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, iv, 266-268.

990. **Cedarn:** Of cedar, like *azurn*, 893 above, and *silvern*, *leathern*, etc.

992. **Iris:** Goddess of the rainbow, and the bow is her *purpled* (fringed, or embroidered) *scarf*.

993. **Blow:** Used transitively, *i.e.*, cause to blow.

998. **If your ears be true:** If you are able to perceive the symbolic or purified meaning of the old myths. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, 589-629: Love "is the scale By which to Heavenly Love thou may'st ascend," etc.

999. **Adonis:** Adonis was mortally wounded by a wild boar. Milton, however, has him recover, for as a god of nature he typifies the death of vegetation and its return to life each year. Cf. *Hymn on Nativity*, 204, note.

1002. **Assyrian queen:** Astarte, identified with Aphrodite or Venus, who loved Adonis. The worship of Venus came to Greece from the East. Cf. *Paradise Lost*, i, 438-452.

1004. **Celestial Cupid:** Cupid is made the type of heavenly pure love. *Advanced* goes with *But far above*.

1005. **Psyche:** In the story of Cupid and Psyche (see *Class. Dic.*), Psyche, as a punishment for her curiosity, is made to wander from place to place, persecuted by Venus; finally she becomes immortal and is united with Cupid forever. The myth allegorizes the discipline of the soul (Greek *ψυχή*, the soul), in its pursuit of perfected or *celestial* bliss. In his *Apology for Smectymnuus*, Milton speaks of that "Love which is truly so, whose charming cup is only virtue," and whose "first and chiefest office begins and ends in the soul, producing those happy twins of her divine generation, Knowledge and Virtue." This was written eight years after *Comus*.

1010. **Two blissful twins:** Compare Spenser's treatment of the myth, *Faerie Queene*, iii, 6, 50, where but one child is born, Pleasure.

1015. **Bowed welkin:** The domed sky. At the horizon the curve of the arch seems to *bend slow*.

1017. **Corners:** Horns of the moon (Latin *cornu*, horn). So *Macbeth*, iii, 5, 23: "Upon the corner of the moon," etc.

1021. **Sphery chime:** The chiming spheres, music of the spheres. Beyond the spheres is the empyrean or true heaven, the abode of pure spirits.

1022. **Or if Virtue, etc.:** These closing lines epitomize the teaching of the whole poem and express Milton's sublime confidence in the power of moral and spiritual purity. When passing through Geneva on his return from Italy in 1639, he was asked to write in an autograph album, and wrote this closing couplet, adding the Latin verse "*Cœlum non animum muto dum trans mare curro.*" Upon this Masson remarks: "It was as if he said, 'Wherever I go, the sentiment of the last two lines of my *Comus* is always my fixed belief.'" This album is now in the Sumner Collection at Harvard College.

LYCIDAS

Learned Friend: This friend was Milton's college companion at Cambridge, Edward King, son of Sir John King, Secretary for Ireland. He entered Christ's College in 1626, at the age of fourteen; in 1630 he was made a Fellow, and in 1633 received the degree of M.A. He remained at the university to study for the Church. In the long vacation of 1637 he sailed from Chester to visit his friends in Ireland; the ship foundered off the Welsh coast and nearly all on board perished.

Of Milton's personal relations with King we know nothing except what is implied in the poem. He seems to have been much esteemed at the university, and soon after his death a volume of memorial poems was published at Cambridge, to which *Lycidas* was Milton's contribution, the only poem in the collection of any literary value. The poem was reprinted in 1645 in the first collected edition of Milton's poems, and it was then that the prefatory note, or argument, was added to the title.

1. **Yet once more:** Milton had written nothing since *Comus*, three years before, and it is supposed that he had determined to await the maturing of his faculties, through study and the gracious influences of the "Cherub Contemplation," before

attempting another important poem. But the *sad occasion* of his college associate's death forces him to anticipate his *mellowing year* and pluck more of the unripe fruit of his genius.

2. **Myrtles brown:** *Brown* is dusky or somber in color. It is Horace's epithet for the myrtle, "*pulla myrtus*," *Odes*, i, 25, 18. The *laurel*, *myrtle*, and *ivy* were associated with Apollo and the Muses by the classic poets and are therefore used here symbolically for poetry; all three are *never sere*, that is, are evergreen.

3. **Harsh and crude:** Unripe and sour, epithets hardly applicable to the poems he had already written; but Milton had imposed upon himself the severest tests of poetic excellence, and *Lycidas* itself clearly shows a transitional maturing of his powers, in preparation for that loftier flight which he was contemplating.

4. **Forced fingers rude:** A noun supported by an adjective on either side was a favorite arrangement with Milton. Often the second adjective qualifies the idea contained in the first adjective and noun together. Cf. "*Sad occasion dear*," 6 below, and 42 below; also *L'Allegro*, 40 and 134.

5. **Shatter:** Scatter. It is captious criticism that finds fault with *mellowing year* as being inconsistent with evergreen laurel and ivy. These words simply mean poetry, or poetic fruit, of which alone Milton is thinking, and *mellowing year* simply means the *due season* for gathering this poetic fruit.

6. **Dear:** Used in the intensive sense of extreme; or a high degree of the quality implied; as in *Hamlet*, i, 2, 182: "Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven"; also *As You Like It*, i, 3, 34, and "deare constraint," *Faerie Queene*, i, 1, 53.

8. **Lycidas:** A name taken from the pastoral poetry of Theocritus and Vergil.

10. **He knew himself to sing:** He knew how to write poetry; a Latinism. With *build the lofty rhyme*, Bell compares Horace's "*condere carmen*," to build a song (*Epistles*, i, 3). Milton seems to have looked upon King's poetry with the kindly eye of friendship; the only poems that survive are Latin poems, which Masson thinks "not very poetical or elegant." The original manuscript shows "he well knew" for "he knew."

13. **Welter:** Be tossed about by the waves, exposed to the parching wind.

14. **Melodious tear:** A pretty phrase for elegiac poems. Masson notes that the sound of this word *tear* is "the dominant rhyme" of the prologue, or introductory paragraph.

15. **The sacred well:** The Pierian Spring at the foot of Mount Olympus, the *seat of Jove*. Here the Muses, daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, were born and dwelt, although another of their sacred haunts was Mount Helicon in Bœotia, with its spring, Aganippe, which is also called by the poets "the sacred well."

17. **Somewhat loudly sweep the string:** This would seem to mean: Sing in a lofty tone worthy of the noble theme.

19. **Muse:** In the unusual sense of *poet*.

20. **Lucky words:** Words expressing good wishes. "Let me, with whatever reluctance, write this memorial poem now, if I would hope that, when *I* am dead, some one may write with kindly interest of *me*" (Masson). Compare this passage with the similar fancy of Gray, at the end of the *Elegy*.

22. **My sable shroud:** My black coffin, the same as *my destined urn* above.

23. **Selfsame hill:** Christ's College, Cambridge. The pastoral idea is carried out consistently. The college companions are shepherds, and their college duties and pleasures are described in the language of the common occupations of shepherds.

26. **Opening eyelids of the Morn:** "The eyelids of the morning" is a marginal reading of *Job*, iii, 9, for "dawning of the day" in the text. Warton quotes (beshrew his eyes!) Middleton's *Game at Chesse* (1625):

"like a pearl
Dropt from the opening eyelids of the Morn
Upon the bashful rose."

Henry More, Sylvester, and Sophocles (*Antigone*, 103) "used the same phrase," says Browne. The Cambridge manuscript has "glimmering" for "opening."

27-28. **Heard what time, etc.:** Heard the *grayfly* at the

time when she winds, etc. Note the pronunciation of *heard*, still found occasionally among old-fashioned people. The *grayfly* is the trumpet-fly, and its sharp humming is heard in the heat of the day; hence its *sultry horn*.

29. **Battening:** Feeding or fattening.

30. **The star that rose at evening:** Evidently the evening star is in the poet's mind, as in *Comus*, 93, even though it "appears, not rises," as one editor complains. The original manuscript has "even-star bright."

32. **Rural ditties:** The poetic attempts of the two young friends.

33. **Tempered, etc.:** Attuned to the shepherd's pipe. Cf. *Comus*, 345, note.

34. **Rough Satyrs danced and Fauns:** "Miscellaneous Cambridge undergraduates" (Masson). In Greek mythology the Satyrs are woodland deities with puck noses, bristling hair, goatlike ears, and short tails; they tend cattle, dance, frolic with the Nymphs, play upon the pipe, and revel with Dionysus (Bacchus). The Romans identified them with their Fauni, half men and half goats, with horns and cloven feet, the chief of whom was Faunus or Pan.

36. **Old Damœtas:** Probably William Chappell, Milton's first tutor. Masson, however, suggests "Joseph Meade or some other well-remembered Fellow of Christ's." The pastoral name occurs in Theocritus, Vergil, and Sidney's *Arcadia*.

40. **Gadding:** Straggling, wandering. Cf. Bacon: "Envy is a gadding passion, and walketh the streets, and doth not keep home."

46. **Canker:** The canker-worm. Cf. *Midsummer Night's Dream*, ii, 2, 3: "Kill cankers in the musk-rose buds."

47. **Taint-worm:** A parasite worm, or insect larva. According to Sir Thomas Browne, a small red spider, called a "taint," which is "by the country people accounted a deadly poison to cows and horses."

48. **Whitethorn:** The hawthorn. Cf. *L'Allegro*, 68.

50. **Where were ye, Nymphs:** The protecting deities (as

Milton seems to make these Greco-British Nymphs) of the sea and adjacent shore should have been there to save Lycidas. The passage is closely reminiscent of Theocritus, *Idylls*, i, 66-69: "Where, ah! where were ye when Daphnis was languishing; ye Nymphs, where were ye? for surely ye dwelt not by the great stream of the river Anapus, nor on the watch-tower of Etna, nor by the sacred water of Acis," etc.

52. **The steep:** Perhaps Penmaenmawr, opposite Anglesey, was in mind, or Kerig-y-Druidion in Denbigshire, a burial place of the Druids. The *Druids* were the priests, lawgivers, and bards of the ancient Celts.

54. **Mona:** The island of Anglesey, once covered with woods, the favorite residence of the Druids.

55. **Deva:** The Dee, down which King sailed from Chester. Called *wizard* because of the many legends and superstitions associated with it. In Drayton's *Polyolbion* it is called the "hallowed" and the "ominous flood." Spenser makes its valley the early home of King Arthur, when the enchanter Merlin was his teacher (*Faerie Queene*, i, 9, 4). Milton has "ancient hallowed Dee" in *A Vacation Exercise*, 98.

56. **I fondly dream:** I say to myself "If only ye had been there," but I foolishly dream, for even Orpheus himself could not be saved.

58. **The Muse:** Calliope, mother of Orpheus. For the first part of the Orpheus myth, see *L'Allegro*, 149, note. Having offended the Thracian women who were celebrating the orgies of Bacchus—the rout that made the hideous roar—he was torn in pieces by them and his head, thrown into the river Hebrus, was carried to the island of Lesbos. Cf. "Nor could the Muse defend her son" (*Paradise Lost*, vii, 32-38). Lines 58-63 in the Cambridge manuscript are:

"What could the golden-haired Calliope
For her enchanting son,
When she beheld (the gods far-sighted be)
His gory scalp roll down the Thracian Sea?"

In the margin the last two lines are changed to the following:

"Whom universal nature might lament,
And Heaven and Hell deplore,
When his divine head down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore."

64. **What boots it:** What avails it, of what use is it. In *Paradise Lost* the modern form *incessant* is used instead of *uncessant*.

65. **Homely, slighted, shepherd's trade:** Pastoral language for the humble profession of the poet.

66. **Strictly meditate, etc.:** Devote one's self to the work of the poet with unremitting zeal and study. *Thankless Muse*, unappreciated, profitless poetry.

67. **Were it not better, etc.:** Would it not be better sense to live a life of ease and pleasure, as others are accustomed to do. We now find *use*, in this sense, only in the preterit. *Amaryllis* and *Neæra* are stock names of shepherdesses in pastoral poetry.

One is much inclined to see in this passage a comparison of Milton's lofty ideal and purpose in poetry with the ideals of his contemporaries, Herrick, Suckling, Lovelace, Donne, and others, who were writing elegant trifles about dimpled cheeks and cherry lips to please the fashion and win the applause of the hour. In one of his prose pamphlets he seems to allude to these poets, when he says that his own work shall not "be raised from the heat of youth or the vapors of wine; like that which flows at waste from the pen of some vulgar amorist, or the trencher fury of a rhyming parasite."

70. **Clear:** Pure, noble. Cf. *Paradise Regained*, iii, 25.

71. **That last infirmity, etc.:** The desire for praise and renown is a weakness, but a noble weakness, which spurs all great minds to lofty and self-denying efforts. Milton's friend, Sir Henry Wotton, says of King James I: "I will not deny his appetite of glory, which generous minds do ever latest part from." Bell quotes Massinger: "The last weakness wise men put off." The idea occurs in *Tacitus*, iv, 5.

75. **Blind Fury:** Milton knew as well as his learned editors

that he was confusing the Furies with the Fates, intending to signify, undoubtedly, that Atropos, with her *abhorred shears* cuts the *thin-spun thread of life* before the reward of labor, the *fair guerdon*, is found, with the blind relentlessness of the Furies.

76. **But not the praise:** Fate may cut off life, but not praise and honor.

77. **Phœbus:** Apollo, god of poetry, who admonishes the poet for his repining. *Touched my trembling ears* seems to be a memory of Vergil's *Eclogues*, vi, 3: "Cynthia aurem vellit et admonuit."

78-84. True fame is not found in this world, nor is it set off by the glittering tinsel of common praise and flattery, nor does it lie in large notoriety, but lives and flourishes through the infallible verdict of Heaven itself. *Foil* is a metallic leaf placed under a jewel in the setting to increase its brilliancy. Cf. *Paradise Regained*, iii, 60.)

81. **Pure eyes:** Cf. *Habakkuk*, i, 13: God is "of purer eyes than to behold evil."

83. **Pronounces lastly:** Gives final judgment.

85. **Arethuse:** A fountain in the island of Ortygia, near Sicily, representing the pastoral poetry of Theocritus, who was a Sicilian, as the river *Mincius* represents the pastoral poetry of Vergil, who was born at Mantua, on its banks; hence *honored* and *crowned with vocal reeds*, as the pastoral pipes were made of reeds, as well as of the *oat*. *Sliding*, gliding, as in *Hymn on the Nativity*, 47, and *Comus*, 892.

87. **That strain:** The digression in regard to the poet's labor and reward, especially Apollo's voice, is in a loftier tone than the pastoral music to which he now returns.

89. Neptune, who is presumably responsible for the death of Lycidas, sends Triton, *Herald of the Sea*, in his behalf to make a judicial investigation of the case. The suspected subjects all plead "not guilty."

96. **Hippotades:** Æolus, god of the winds, son of Hippotes, whose duty was to keep the winds confined in a huge cave (Vergil's *Æneid*, i, 50).

99. **Panope:** One of the Nereids, the *sisters* who were playing upon the surface of a calm sea—*level brine*.

101. **Built in the eclipse:** According to a very ancient superstition, anything done under an eclipse bore a curse. The witch-broth in *Macbeth* (iv, 1, 27) contained "slips of yew Slivered in the moon's eclipse."

103. **Camus.** Presiding genius of the River Cam, and of the university; *reverend sire* suggests the antiquity of the university; *went* is "simply passed along" (Hales).

104-106. "He comes attired in a mantle of the hairy river-weed that floats down the Cam; his bonnet is of the sedge of that river, which exhibits peculiar markings, something like the *â â* ('alas! alas!') which the Greeks detected on the leaves of the hyacinth" (Masson). For "Inwrought" the original manuscript has "scrawlèd o'er," with "Inwrought" in the margin.

106. **Sanguine flower:** The beautiful boy Hyacinthus was accidentally killed by Apollo during a game of quoits. Apollo, in his grief, caused the flower to spring up from the blood, with the words of woe marked on its petals. See Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, x, 210.

107. **Pledge:** Child. Cf. *At a Solemn Music*, 1.

109. **The Pilot of the Galilean Lake:** Saint Peter, the head of the Church (*Matthew*, iv, 18) and especially delegated by Christ to be shepherd of his flock (*John*, xxi, 15-17). For the *keys* he bore, see *Matthew*, xvi, 19. The *metals twain* is Milton's fancy. Cf. *Comus*, 13. It must be remembered in connection with this passage that young King was preparing to enter the Church.

112. **Mitered locks:** The miter is the headdress worn by a bishop. Milton is here thinking of St. Peter as the first Bishop of the Church.

113-131. "These nineteen lines of the poem are in some respects the most memorable passage in it. They are an outburst, in 1637, or when Milton was twenty-nine years of age, of that feeling about the state of the English Church under

Laud's rule which, four years afterwards, found more direct and as vehement expression in his prose pamphlets" (Masson).

114. **Enow:** Enough, as in *Comus*, 780.

115. **Climb into the fold:** Cf. *John*, x, 1. Milton had much to say of the corrupt clergy afterwards. In the sonnet *To the Lord General Cromwell* they are "hireling wolves, whose Gospel is their maw." One of his pamphlets is entitled *The likeliest means to remove Hirelings out of the Church*.

118. **Worthy bidden guest:** The conscientious clergy, who have *other care* than merely to *scramble* for the richly endowed church positions—the *shearer's feast*.

119. **Blind mouths:** They are greedy, gluttonous, all mouth, as it were; moreover they are blind leaders, blind even to their true shame.

120. **Aught else the least:** Anything else, even the least.

122. **What recks it them:** What do they care? *Are sped*, are provided for. Cf. Mercutio's grim use of the word, "I am sped" (*Romeo and Juliet*, iii, i, 94).

123. **Lean and flashy songs:** Worthless and showy religious instruction.

124. **Scrannel:** Squeaking. A word apparently coined by Milton, though allied to *scranny* or *scrawny*, thin. Note the skilfully devised harshness of this line.

126. **Swoln with wind, etc.:** False and unwholesome doctrines. See Ruskin's comments on this passage in *Sesame and Lilies*.

128. **The grim wolf:** "Undoubtedly the Church of Rome, the numerous private secessions to which in England in Laud's time were a subject of alarm and complaint among the Puritans" (Masson)

130. **That two-handed engine, etc.:** These two lines have given much trouble. The general meaning is certainly that retribution is about to come upon the corrupt clergy, but what specific *instrument* of retribution Milton had in mind is far from certain. Masson thinks it is the two houses of Parlia-

ment, "the agency by which, three or four years afterwards, the doors of the Church of England *were* dashed in." Others think it refers to the headsman's ax, wielded by two hands, by which eight years later Laud was executed. Or it may be the ax "laid to the root of the tree" (*Matthew*, iii, 10), or the "two-edged sword" of *Revelations*, i, 16, and ii, 12, 16. In the treatise *Of Reformation*, Milton speaks of "the ax of God's reformation hewing at the old and hollow trunk of Papacy." There is also the sword which St. Michael used against Satan "with huge two-handed sway" (*Paradise Lost*, vi, 251). If we must have a literal interpretation, the first seems the most significant, but, as Thurber pertinently remarks, the poet "may have meant to combine certain scriptural expressions into a mysteriously suggestive and oracular prediction, without having in view any single and definite possibility."

132. **Alpheus**: The lover of Arethusa, who was transformed into a river that he might pursue her under the ocean to her Sicilian refuge. See l. 85. Cf. Shelley's poem *Arethusa*. The poet, here returning a second time to the pastoral strain, invokes the two, united in the fountain *Arethuse* (l. 85), as the Muse of pastoral poetry.

Dread voice is the voice of St. Peter, that silenced the pastoral voice.

136. **Use**: Are accustomed to dwell. The construction is, *whispers of shades, etc., dwell*.

138. **Swart star**: Sirius, the dog star, which shines during "dog days," making the face and the fields *swarthy* or brown. Milton frequently transfers an epithet from the effect to the cause. *Sparely* is sparingly, rarely.

141. **Vernal flowers**: The critics have objected that some of the flowers mentioned are summer or autumn flowers; but Milton was writing poetically, not botanically.

142. **Rathe**: Early, the obsolete positive from which we have *rather*. *Forsaken* by the sun, because it blooms so early. Milton first wrote *unwedded*, suggested probably by *Winter's Tale*, iv, 4, 122:

“pale primroses
That die unmarried, ere they can behold
Bright Phœbus in his strength.”

Compare the opening lines of *The Death of a Fair Infant*:

“Soft silken primrose fading timelessly,” etc.

142-151. “This is the most exquisite flower-and-color passage in all Milton’s poetry. His manuscript shows that he brought it to perfection by additions and afterthoughts” (Masson). See Ruskin’s criticism of the passage, *Modern Painters*, iii, 2, 3. Compare the similar passage in Spenser’s *Shepherd’s Calendar* (April):

“Bring hether the pincke and purple Cullambine,” etc.

The passage reads as follows in the Cambridge manuscript:

“Bring the rathe primrose that unwedded dies,
Coloring the pale cheek of unenjoyed love
And that sad flower that strove
To write his own woes on the vermeil grain:
Next add Narcissus that still weeps in vain,
The woodbine, and the pansy freakt with jet,
The glowing violet,
The cowslip wan that hangs his pensive head,
And every bud that Sorrow’s livery wears;
Let daffadillies fill their cups with tears;
Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,
To strew,” etc.

“Sorrow’s livery” was changed to “sad escutcheon,” and then to the present form.

143. **Tufted crowtoe**: A plant so called from its claw-shaped spreading pods, the *Lotus corniculatus*.

144. **Freaked**: Variegated, spotted. Cf. *Henry V*, v, 2, 49: “freckled cowslip.”

146. **Well-attired woodbine**: The fair-flowered honeysuckle, “well head-dressed, as it were,” the words *tire* and *attire* being formerly used for headdress.

151. **Laureate hearse**: The bier, or coffin, decked with laurel, as a token of the dead poet.

152. **For so, etc.:** *For* it affords a little relief to our sorrow *thus* to dally with the fancy that we are strewing his hearse with flowers, while in reality his body is washed far away.

154. **Shores and sounding seas wash, etc.:** Understand after *shores* some such verb as *throw back*. The body is washed ashore here and there and hurled back into the sea, as it were, by the shores. For "Shores" the Cambridge manuscript has "floods."

158. **Monstrous world:** The deep sea peopled with monsters.

159. **Moist vows:** Tearful prayers.

160. **The fable of Bellerus:** Literally, Land's End in Cornwall, called by the Romans *Bellerium*, from which Milton coined *Bellerus*. He first wrote *Corineus*, the name of a fabled giant for whom Cornwall was named.

161. **Guarded mount:** St. Michael's Mount, near Land's End. On the craggy summit is St. Michael's Chair, in which according to legend the *vision* or apparition of the Archangel was once seen, by whom the place was *guarded*.

162. **Namancos:** A town in the province of Galicia, Spain (put down in Mercator's *Atlas*, 1636). Near it is the city of *Bayona*, with its *stronghold* or castle. "It was a boast of the Cornish people that there was a direct line of sea-view from Land's End passing France altogether and hitting no European land till it reached Spain." (Masson).

163. **Look homeward, Angel:** The Archangel, who has ever looked toward Spain, is besought now to turn and look sorrowfully upon the home waters where the body of Lycidas is weltering.

164. **O ye dolphins:** An allusion to the story of Arion, the Greek singer, who when thrown overboard by the pirates was borne ashore on the backs of dolphins, whom he had charmed with his music.

These two lines, 163-4, says Masson, "to me seem the worst in the poem, and the most like a 'conceit.'"

165. Compare this transition and close with the close of Spenser's *November Eclogue* (*Shepherd's Calendar*), and with

the close of Milton's Latin Elegy on the death of his friend Diodati, *Epitaphium Damonis*, in Cowper's translation.

167. **Watery floor:** Surface of the sea. Cf. "level brine," 98 above.

168. **Day-star:** The sun. Cf. "diurnal star," *Paradise Lost*, x, 1069.

169. **Repairs:** Revives.

170. **Tricks his beams, etc.:** Dresses, adorns his beams with golden splendor.

173. **Through the dear might, etc.:** See *Matthew*, xiv, 22-32. "Note the appositeness to the whole subject of the poem in this reference to Christ's power over the waters" (Masson).

176. **Unexpressive:** Inexpressible, inexpressibly sweet. Cf. *Hymn on Nativity*, 116, note. For *nuptial song*, see *Revelations*, xix, 7-9. For "And hears" the Cambridge manuscript has "Listening."

179. **Sweet societies:** Cf. "fellowships of joy" (*Paradise Lost*, xi, 80).

181. **Wipe the tears, etc.:** See *Isaiah*, xxv, 8; *Revelations*, vii, 17.

183. **The Genius of the shore:** Milton has just expressed the Christian conception of Lycidas's eternal state; he now reverts to a pagan idea, common in Latin poetry, that represents the spirit of a drowned person as becoming the guardian spirit of the locality, and ever *good, i. e.*, propitious, to other wanderers. Cf. *Il Penseroso*, 153, 154.

184. **In thy large recompense:** As a large recompense to thee.

186-193. These closing lines, forming a distinct stanza, are a kind of Epilogue, in which the poet speaks in his own person, as it were, and comments upon the elegy now completed.

186. **Uncouth:** Rustic; originally unknown, strange. It seems rather fanciful to interpret this as a self-deprecating epithet in the sense of *obscure*, as well as out of harmony with the context.

188. **Sounded the notes of tender and varied music, in allu-**

sion to the changing moods of the poem. *Stops* are the holes in the pipe for the fingers, "ventages," Hamlet calls them. The *quill* (Latin, *calamus*) is the reed or shepherd's pipe.

189. **Doric lay:** Pastoral song. The Greek pastoral poets wrote in the Doric dialect.

190. **Stretched out all the hills:** Lengthened the shadows of the hills.

192. **Twitted his mantle blue:** Drew it tightly about him. *Blue* is the common color of the shepherd's dress.

193. **To-morrow, etc:** Cf. Fletcher's *Purple Island*, vi, 77:

"To-morrow shall ye feast in pastures new."

The attempt is generally made, with too much emphasis it would seem, to find autobiographic hints in this closing line, as, for example, an allusion to his Italian journey that followed soon after, or an allusion to the great purpose, already in mind, of writing an English epic. Masson regards it as "a peculiarly picturesque ending, in which Milton announces that he is passing on to other occupations."

EPITAPH ON THE ADMIRABLE DRAMATIC POET, W. SHAKSPERE

This poem appeared among the commendatory poems printed in the second folio edition of Shakspeare, 1632, bearing no signature. When Milton collected his poems for publication in 1645, he included these verses with the title "On Shakspear, 1630." From this date and the wording of the first line, it has been inferred that there was some movement in London that year for the erection of a monument to Shakspeare. The suggestion, however, may have come from Ben Jonson's famous eulogy in the first folio, 1623:

"Thou art a monument without a tomb," etc.

And we are sure that Milton was at this time an ardent admirer of Shakspeare, and it is an interesting coincidence that this should be the first of his poems to appear in print.

4. **Star-ypointing**: Pointing to the stars. The *y* (German, *ge*) belongs properly only to the past participle. Cf. *Hymn on Nativity*, 155, note.

8. **Livelong**: For this word Milton first printed *lasting*. Which is the better?

9. **Slow-endeavoring art**: "A reference to Shakspeare's extreme ease and fluency in composition, as attested by his fellow-players, Heminge and Condell, the editors of the First Folio: 'His mind and hand went together: And what he thought he uttered with that easiness that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers'" (Masson). Milton studiously revised and improved his work.

11. **Unvalued**: Invaluable. Cf. *Richard III*, i, 4, 27: "Unvalued jewels."

SONNETS

To the Nightingale

3-7. **With fresh hope**, etc.: According to old superstition, to hear the nightingale before the cuckoo was a token of good luck in the affairs of love. Cf. *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, attributed to Chaucer, or Wordsworth's modernized version of the poem.

9. **Bird of hate**: The cuckoo. Other poets have a more cordial feeling for the cuckoo. See Wordsworth's two poems *To the Cuckoo* and *The Cuckoo at Laverna*.

The nightingale poems of other English poets should be compared with this sonnet, as Drummond of Hawthornden's *To the Nightingale*, Lady Winchilsea's *To the Nightingale*, Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*, Wordsworth's "O Nightingale! thou surely art," Shelley's *Woodman and the Nightingale*, and Coleridge's *The Nightingale*.

For other descriptions of the nightingale in Milton's poems see *Il Penseroso*, 56-64; *Comus*, 234; *Paradise Lost*, iv, 598-603; vii, 433-436.

12. **Delphic**: Oracular; deep with wisdom, like the oracles of Delphi.

14. **Dost make us marble, etc.**: "Dost change *us* into marble by the over-effort of thought to which thou compellest us" (Masson).

15. **Sepulchered**: Accented on the second syllable.

On his Having Arrived at the Age of Twenty-three

This sonnet was inclosed in a letter to a friend who apparently had remonstrated with Milton for continuing his fruitless life at the university and withholding himself from the Church, for which he was supposed to be preparing. He answered that he was restrained by a "Sacred reverence and religious advisement, not taking thought [overanxious] of being *late*, so it gave advantage to be more *fit*," and added: "That you may see that I am something suspicious of myself, and do take notice of a certain *belatedness* in me, I am the bolder to send you some of my nightward thoughts some little while ago, because they come in not altogether unfitly, made up in a Petrarchian stanza which I told you of."

4. **Shew'th**: The rhyme is with *youth, truth, endu'th*, indicating the old pronunciation of the word.

8. **Timely-happy**: "Wise with the wisdom proportionate to one's years" (Thurber).

10. **Even**: Equal, proportioned to.

13. **All is**: "He had said, 'It shall be'; now he corrects himself—'nay, all my life is so already, if I have grace to use it as in God's sight'" (Browne).

To Mr. H. Lawes, on his Airs

One of the copies of this sonnet in Milton's own hand bears the inscription, "To my Friend, Mr. Henry Lawes, Feb. 9, 1645." This was eleven years after Milton had collaborated with this friend in the production of *Comus*. Lawes was the most distinguished composer of his period in England, and had

the honor of being "Gentleman of the King's Chappel and one of His Majesties private Musick" to Charles I. He composed the music for the celebrated *Inns of Court Masque*, set to music the poems of Waller, Carew, and other cavalier poets, and was the author of the anthem for the Coronation of Charles II. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

4. **With Midas' ears:** In the musical contest between Pan and Apollo, Midas acted as umpire and decided in favor of Pan, whereupon Apollo changed his unmusical ears to ass's ears (Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, xi, 175).

Committing, setting at variance, confounding; from the Latin phrase *committere pugiles*, to match gladiators.

9. **Lend her wing:** Many editions have *send*, apparently a typographical error in the edition of 1673. The word is *lend* in Milton's original manuscript.

10. **Phœbus' quire:** The contemporary poets, whose songs he set to music.

11. **Or story:** This sonnet was first published with other poetical tributes in Lawes's *Choice Psalms*, 1648. In a marginal note Milton explains this allusion: "The story of Ariadne set by him to musick"—the story being by the poet Cartwright.

13. **Casella:** In Purgatory Dante meets his old friend, the musician Casella, and asks him to sing one of the love songs in which he excelled on earth, and Casella sings one of the poet's own songs (*Purgatorio*, ii, 76-114).

14. **Milder:** Compared with the shades of the *Inferno*, from which Dante has just come when he meets Casella.

On the Lord General Fairfax

This sonnet and the next two were first printed in Phillips's "*Life of Milton*," in 1694, twenty years after the poet's death, being omitted from the edition of 1673 because, as Masson surmises, they "savored too much of pre-Restoration politics to be allowable." The siege of Colchester, June 15 to August 28, 1648, was one of the principal events of the Civil War.

"Milton expresses," says Masson, "the general feeling of the hour, not only about the particular victory, but also about the character of Fairfax, and England's further hopes from him."

6. **New rebellions:** Royalist risings for the second Civil War. The *Hydra* was a monstrous dragon with nine heads, each of which when cut off was succeeded by two more; the destruction of the monster was one of the "twelve labors" of Hercules.

7. **False North:** The Scotch sent an army into England to support the Royalist risings, which was regarded as a breach of the Solemn League and Covenant between the two nations.

8. **Imp their serpent wings:** A term of falconry. To *imp* a hawk's wing is to repair its broken feathers. Cf. *Richard II*, i, 1, 292.

To the Lord General Cromwell, May, 1652

Cromwell had established the political and military strength of the Commonwealth, and now the people looked to him to settle Church matters, which were in chaos. This sonnet was, says Masson, "a call to Cromwell to save England from a mercenary ministry of any denomination, or a new ecclesiastical tyranny of any form. . . . Yet the sonnet may stand as Milton's tribute of respect to Cromwell on the whole."

7. **Darwen stream:** A stream in Lancashire, the scene of Cromwell's three days' battle, in which he defeated the invading Scots under the Duke of Hamilton. See Cromwell's *Letters and Speeches* (Carlyle's ed.), letter 64.

8. **Dunbar field:** Cromwell secured a crushing defeat of the Scots in the battle of Dunbar, September 3, 1650.

9. **Worcester's laureate wreath:** Cromwell's decisive victory in the battle of Worcester, September 3, 1651, was called his "crowning mercy."

14. **Hireling workers:** Milton here inveighs against the Presbyterian clergy, as in *Lycidas* against the Episcopal clergy.

On the Late Massacre in Piedmont

The slaughter of the Waldenses in the valley of Piedmont, in 1655, was ordered by the Duke of Savoy, upon their refusal to become Roman Catholics. England was horrified by the event; a relief fund of £40,000 was raised; and Cromwell's remonstrance sent to foreign governments was so vigorous as to bring the persecution to an end. "Milton's sonnet," says Masson, "is his private and more tremendous expression in verse of the feeling he expressed publicly, in Cromwell's name, in his Latin State Papers."

"From this sonnet," says Pattison, "we may learn that the poetry of a poem is lodged somewhere else than in its matter, or its thoughts, or its imagery, or its words. Our heart is here taken by storm, but not by any of these things. The poet hath breathed on us, and we have received his inspiration. In this sonnet is realized Wordsworth's definition of poetry. 'The spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling.'"

1. **Whose bones lie scattered, etc.:** "Many were butchered, others were taken away in chains, and hundreds of families were driven for refuge to the mountains covered with snow, to live there miserably, or perish with cold and hunger."

3. **Who kept thy truth, etc.:** The Waldenses were believed to have kept up the traditions of primitive Christianity from the time of the Apostles.

10. **Their martyred blood, etc.:** An allusion to the saying of Tertullian: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."

12. **The triple Tyrant:** The Pope, with his triple crown.

14. **Babylonian woe:** The mythical Babylon of *Revelation*, xvii, xviii, was identified by the Puritans with the Church of Rome.

On his Blindness

"Again and again in Milton's later writings, in prose and in verse, there are passages of the most touching sorrow over his

darkened and desolate condition, with yet a tone of the most pious resignation, and now and then an outbreak of a proud conviction that God, in blinding his bodily eyes, had meant to enlarge and clear his inner vision, and make him one of the world's truest seers and prophets. The present sonnet is one of the first of these confidences of Milton on the subject of his blindness" (Masson).

2. **Ere half my days:** It is probable that his blindness became total in 1652, when Milton was forty-four years old. He evidently means half his working or productive days; his greatest literary projects were still before him.

3. **One talent:** Cf. *Matthew*, xxv, 14-30.

8. **Fondly:** Foolishly, as in *Lycidas*, 56.

12. **Thousands:** That is, of angelic beings. Cf. Spenser's *Hymn of Heavenly Love*, 63-69.

How far that little candle
threw his beam!
It showed a good deal in
a manly world (the) ^{of the}

His life was gentle and the times
Sang in him that Nature's region
stood up
and say that the world, that
was a man. Or, better than



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